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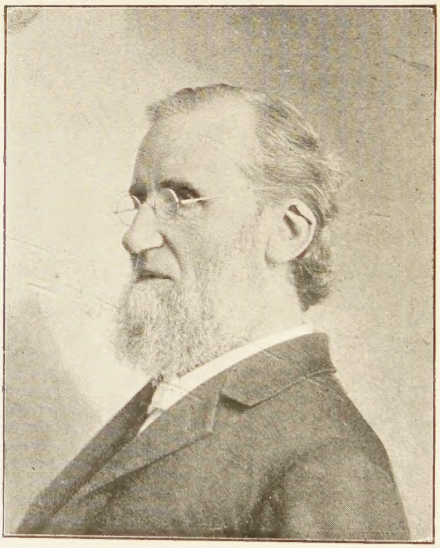

L. A. Gothald.

Joy in the Divine Government

And Other Sermons

BY

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INTRODUCTION BY

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PERSONAL.

The author of these sermons had planned for their publication some considerable time before his lamented death, Sept. 15, 1900.

The cordial welcome with which his previous volume, "Sermons for Festival Days," was received, had encouraged him to feel and hope that a second volume would accomplish good in many places where his voice could never be heard.

His life-long and scholarly friend, Prof. Henry Eyster Jacobs, contributed the accompanying words of introduction, in accordance with the author's request.

The title is the author's own selection, and well illustrates the spirit of joyous submission which characterized him during his later years of suffering and affliction. His sudden death prevented the realization of his cherished hope of seeing these sermons given to the world. But his wish and purpose are herewith carried out in their present publication; so that

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he being dead may yet speak to thousands through these printed pages, as he already addresses thousands through the immortal influences of his consecrated life, whether as pastor or preacher, professor or friend.

May the Divine blessing accompany this volume in its mission of inspiration, conviction and consolation to the souls of its readers! May it add new stars to that faithful ministry which has already been so gloriously crowned!

F. G. G.

INTRODUCTION.

Numerous as are the volumes devoted to the form of religious literature to which this volume belongs, there is always place for more. The Holy Scriptures can never be exhausted, and every land and age has its own peculiar mode of re-stating its old truths. Even the most familiar texts become fresh in the mouth of a preacher, who actually writes and speaks out of the abundance of his heart. His great difficulty is not to find something to say, but to find the time and opportunities to expound all the fruitful themes that are ever crowding upon him with their plea that they be treated in a sermon.

Dr. Gotwald's discourses show that his heart was in his calling as a preacher, and that their careful preparation was no drudgery, but a work of delight. Plain, practical, direct, forcible, written in a singularly simple and chaste style, and without any ambition to display either learning or rhetoric, they are per-

vaded by a spirituality that is refreshing and inspiring.

Clear and positive in his convictions, Dr. Gotwald evades no question because it is controverted; and, yet, the polemical spirit nowhere appears. He tries to get at the heart of his text, and then to carry it straight to the hearts of his hearers.

There is not a discourse in this book that the "common man" cannot understand; and yet they are far from being superficial. Though his voice may be heard no more in the pulpit, through these sermons his influence will be felt far and wide in advancing the cause of the Redeemer, to whose service his life was consecrated, and whom he so devotedly served.

Henry E. Jacobs.

Philadelphia, Pa., September 27th, 1898.

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JOY IN THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT.

TEXT.

"The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice."—Ps. xcvii. 1.

That there is a Divine Government, or a Providential Rulership, over the universe, is a fact made probable already by reason, and repeatedly and fully declared by revelation. It is a dictate already of reason that, if God alone could create the universe, He also alone is able to uphold, to direct and to govern what He thus created. In other words, the admission of the doctrine of divine creation of all things, logically necessitates the admission, also, of the doctrine of the divine government of all things; declaring with Paul: "Of Him, and to Him, and through Him are all things, and by Him all things consist."

There are some, however, who, even while admitting that God may have created the universe, yet claim that He does not now

govern it personally. They maintain that He has left it to govern or develop itself. This is the theory of our modern skeptical evolutionists, or materialistic scientists. As Melanchthon once wrote: "They think of God as a shipbuilder, who, when he has completed his vessel, launches it and then leaves it." Or, to put it into our modern phraseology, they say that "God has placed the government of the universe under established natural laws."

Let us not, however, in this matter, be imposed upon by a mere plausible phraseology. For what, after all, is this something which is thus so learnedly called "a natural law," and by which our present materialistic skepticism thus separates God from His works, and ignores and denies Him as the Providential Governor of the universe which He has created. Law is not, in itself, a force. Law is simply an expression of the will of the lawgiver; is simply the mode or manner in which intelligent mind and power, acting back of the law, expresses itself and executes its will. And so this thing called "natural

law," is not in itself an independent and self existent or self-executing power, apart from God, but it is simply God's established order of expressing His will, and of putting forth His force both in the creation and government of the universe. There is, e. g., what we call "the law of gravitation." But that law is not in itself a cause. It simply is the expression of a general fact. It is not that law of gravitation which makes an apple fall always downward instead of upward. It is something back of that law, and mightier than it, which causes it. The law itself, instead of being an independent cause, is only an effect of a cause, and that cause is God who has established the law. God is the force acting, and what we call the law is simply an expression of the mode or manner in which, in this especial respect, God thus acts.

And so with regard to all the so-called "natural laws" of the universe. They have not originated or established themselves. They do not sustain or execute themselves. It is not they that are the rulers of the uni-

verse. On the contrary, they are merely the established principles on or by which God rules it; the methods only in which God ordinarily and generally exerts His power; the instruments or agencies simply by which God rules. As our text declares, "The Lord reigneth." Not fate, not chance, not law, but God, the Eternal First Cause and Upholder of all things, is on the Throne, and it is His sceptre that sways dominion over the whole realm both of mind and matter.

But whatever may be the teachings of reason upon the subject, this truth of a divine providence or government over all things is, we are sure, clearly and repeatedly declared to us, in Scripture. So frequently, indeed, does the Bible declare it, that, if we were to take from it all that it thus contains upon this subject of God's providence or government, the divine volume would indeed be very greatly abridged, and would be an almost entirely different book. Almost countless are the passages in the Sacred Scriptures which assert and exhibit it; and everywhere in this inspired volume is God

declared to be ruling and governing all things according to His will. He is declared to be the Preserver both of man and beast; to "uphold all things by the word of His power;" to "open His hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing;" to "give to the beast his food and to the young ravens which cry." We are told that in Him "we live and move and have our being;" that by Him "our steps are ordered;" that from Him comes to us "every good and perfect gift;" that "He is the Governor among the nations;" that "He is the Lord, our God, and His judgments are in all the earth." We read that "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will;" that "the Lord killeth and maketh alive; He bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up; He maketh poor and maketh rich;" that "promotion cometh neither from the west nor from the south, but God is the Judge; He putteth down one, and setteth up another;" that "He notes 'the sparrow's fall,' and that He has numbered the very hairs of every head."

That "the Lord reigns" is not, then, a mere probability of reason, but it is an absolute certainty, declared most frequently by God Himself in His own infallible word.

He, therefore, who doubts or denies this doctrine or fact of such divine providence or government must also, if he would be consistent, doubt and deny the Scriptures themselves, which teach it; for no truth is more clearly and positively assumed and declared everywhere throughout this Word of God than is this truth: "The Lord reigneth."

Admitting then the fact of this divine government or providence over the universe, we may next properly inquire:

WHAT IS THE CHARACTER OF IT?

From what we know of the character of God, as He has revealed Himself to us, both in conscience and in His Word, we can readily infer and know what the character of His government is. The personal character of a king determines the character of his kingdom, and of a law-giver the character of the laws which he enacts. And so God's character decides what is and must be the char-

acter of the providence or government which He exercises.

I. God, first, is a God of infinite wisdom: His government therefore is carried on, we must assume, by infinite wisdom.

In proof of the infinite wisdom of God, the Scriptures tell us that past, present, and future are all constantly open before Him; that He sees the end of all things as well as the beginning; that He foreknows every occurrence, contingency, possibility in all time and eternity. As in an ever present picture, everything that ever has occurred, or does now occur, or will occur, lies manifest to His sight. The minutest object, as well as the greatest, the least important event as well as the most important, the obscurest person as well as the most famous; all are alike known to Him.

Thus infinite in wisdom He always knows also what is the best; the best for His own glory, the best for the happiness and good of all His creatures, the best ends at which to aim, the best means to employ, the best time in which to act, the best choice to make.

Guided by His unerring wisdom, He knows when to give and when to withhold, when to check and when to impel, when to enrich and when to impoverish, when to create and when to destroy. He knows all things. His wisdom is all-embracing and infinite. He is the Omniscient God. He cannot, therefore, possibly, in anything, ever fall into error or be guilty of the slightest mistake.

And this, therefore, is also, I now add, the character of His government. It cannot be otherwise. God, being what He is, infinite in wisdom, His government is also based upon infinite wisdom, and is conducted upon the most accurate and minute divine intelligence, a government in which all things are done wisely and well, and in the best possible way both for His glory and the highest good of His creatures.

II. This divine government is also a government of infinite power: for God is the Almighty or Omnipotent God.

He not only knows all things, but He has the ability also to do all things. "All things are possible with God," says our Saviour.

Whatever He wills to do, that He possesses the might to do. All agencies are under His control, and subject to His bidding; and all can be wheeled by Him, at His pleasure, into His service, and made to subserve His purposes. At any point in the universe, upon any being, or upon any order of beings, at any link in the great chain of cause and effect, either through the agency of created beings, such as man, angels, devils, by nations or by individuals, by Church or by State, by mind or matter, or else directly, by His own agency alone, without the employment of any secondary causes, He can bring His divine power to bear, and can accomplish whatsoever He will.

His government, therefore, is a mighty government; mighty to enforce its authority, to exact its demands, to accomplish its ends, to overthrow all opposition to it, to punish and destroy its foes, and to deliver and help and save its friends. All power is His in heaven, earth, and hell, and all things are under the sway of His sceptre and subject to His will. But

III. THIS DIVINE GOVERNMENT MUST ALSO, WE MAY NOTICE THIRDLY, BE A GOVERNMENT OF PATIENCE AND LOVE: FOR GOD IS "THE GOD OF PATIENCE" AND "GOD OF LOVE."

Under this divine government beings exist and occurrences are allowed which are directly opposed to God, and we sometimes are led to ask: Why, if the Lord reigneth, are they allowed? Satan, e. g., exists. If "the Lord reigns," why is he allowed to exist? Sin exists. Why? Injustice, wrong, oppression, cruelty, fraud, profanity, murder, crimes of every kind, exist. Why? If "the Lord reigns," if there be a moral government over man, if God has all wisdom so that He knows of the existence of all this sin, and if He has all power so that He could, in a moment, destroy sinners and banish sin from the universe, why, as a holy God, as He is, does He not, also, at once do so? Why is sin thus allowed under the government of a divine and holy being such as God is?

And there are sorrow and suffering also everywhere in the world. If the Lord reigneth, why do they exist? Why does He not

banish them? Why, especially, are not the righteous, His own people, exempted from them? Has He no knowledge of their sorrows and sufferings? Yes, of every one of them. Has He not the power to exempt and relieve them from them? Yes, with all ease He could do it. And does He not care for them? does He not love them? does He not wish them happiness? O, yes, infinitely does He thus love and care for them. But why then, I repeat, do they exist? Why is sin here? Why sorrow? Why suffering?

Such questions are easily asked; and they are very deep questions, and are very hard to answer. For remember it is God's government of which we are speaking. And what are we that we should expect to fathom and comprehend fully His deep counsels, His infinite vision and plans?

But this much, from our knowledge of His character, we may and do know, whether we know why they exist or not: viz., that neither sin nor suffering would exist under the moral government of such a Being as God if it were not best, for His glory and for the highest

ultimate happiness of His creatures that they should exist. Divine Love, we may feel sure, is the moral background of all this dark picture of sin and suffering in the universe: the key that explains these mysteries of the moral government of a holy and benevolent Jehovah.

Not, therefore, because God has no power to banish them, not because He is indifferent to their existence do Satan, sin and suffering exist. But they exist because our human race is now, here in this life, in a probationary state, in a state of moral test or trial, in a condition of moral discipline and culture and purification for a better and an eternal life hereafter. And these are the agencies which God employs to carry on this probationary state, and under it to evolve and execute His own wise and eternal counsels.

But this, I repeat, we may, from our knowledge of His character, be sure of: that God in love rules the universe, and that whatever physical or moral evil exists in this world of ours exists for wise and benevolent purposes, and will all be overruled and used for the ul-

timate happiness of the largest number. And this is why even His own children are not exempt from suffering. It is just because of His love for them that He does not exempt them. The sorrows, the trials, the sufferings, the tears, and the heartaches which thus, under His government, come upon His children have rich divine blessings in them, work together for their spiritual and eternal good, purify their characters, fit them for heaven, and are the means which He employs to bring them, at last, to that blessed life beyond the present where sorrow and suffering shall be forever unknown. Even in the darkest and most painful dealings of God with His people, it is still in love He deals with them. As Paul writes: "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and correcteth every son whom He receiveth." He causes "all things to work together for good to them that love Him and are the called according to His purpose." In everything there is love.

"Even the hour that darkest seemeth,
Does His changeless goodness prove;

From the gloom His brightness streameth,
God is Wisdom, God is Love."

IV. THIS DIVINE GOVERNMENT, I NOTE YET IN THE FOURTH PLACE, IS A UNIVERSAL AND AN ALL-EMBRACING GOVERNMENT, EXTENDING TO EVERY POSSIBLE OBJECT AND BEING: FOR GOD IS AN OMNIPRESENT GOD.

It extends to all worlds; to every star and planet and sun. It embraces all beings; angels, archangels, redeemed spirits, devils, lost souls in hell, every human being on earth, every beast and bird and insect and worm on land, every fish of the sea. It includes under its sway every event; the rise and fall of empires, the history of nations, the ravages of war, the sweep of the pestilence, the growth or failure of harvests, the discoveries, arts, inventions, commerce of the world, the flight of a comet, the fall of the raindrop or flake of snow; all are comprehended in and are the result of this universal government or providence of God.

And not to each human being only, but to every particular experience, occurrence, and event in the history of that being does this

divine government also extend. Nothing, relating to any one of us, no matter how trivial, is unembraced in God's providence over us. All things enter into His divine plans concerning us; are links in the chain of causes with which He is working out our destiny; means by which He is seeking to draw and hold us to Himself, to chasten and purify our characters, to guide us through life, and bring us finally to the bliss of the heavenly life. Our birth, our surroundings, our experiences, our circumstances, our friends or enemies, our wealth or poverty, our prosperity or adversity, our sickness or health, our joy or sorrow, our life or death, God's hand is in them all. "The Lord reigneth" may be said concerning them all. All are parts of His providential plan, and are embraced under His government over us. "He knows our downsitting and our uprising; He understands our thoughts afar off; He compasses our path and our lying down; He is acquainted with all our ways."

Men talk very foolishly when they say that they believe in a general providence, but not

in a particular or special providence. There can be no general providence without a particular one making up the general; just as there can be no whole without all the parts, no chain without all the links composing the chain, no ocean without all the drops that make up the ocean. The seemingly small and insignificant things in a man's life are often the hinges upon which his very destiny, for both time and eternity, turns. Mere trifles seemingly have often been the occasions or causes of some of the greatest revolutions both in Church and State. Could there be a providence in the one without a providence also in the other? A providence in the result and yet none in the causes and means producing the result? A providence in the end and yet none in the beginning? Folly! A general providence can, in the nature of the case, only exist through an all-embracing particular providence. And we are shut up to believe either in such particular providence or believe in no providence at all. Denying God's government in all things, we must deny it in anything; and we must

regard ourselves, and the universe, as without any thought or care in the divine mind at all.

But let us now yet especially notice, in conclusion, the Psalmist's exhortation, here in our text, based upon this fact that "the Lord thus reigneth."

He bids us rejoice in it. "The Lord," he exclaims, "reigneth." Hence, because of this, "let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of isles be glad thereof." Let there, he means, be universal joy in this fact of the divine government. If God reigns, then there is room and reason to rejoice. Let men rejoice that the universe is not under the reign of chance, or fate, or mere cold law, but that the Lord reigneth, that God is on the throne; a God of infinite wisdom, power, love, a God everywhere present, and doing all things for His glory and His creatures' good. Let every flower that blooms rejoice, for it is He that arrays it in its glory. Let all the beasts of the field rejoice, for it is He that giveth them their food. Let the birds of the air rejoice,

for He careth for them. Let sun, moon and stars rejoice, for it is He that holds them in safety in their orbits and guides them in their courses. Let the earth rejoice, for it is He that hath made it and who upholdeth it. Let the nations rejoice, for He is controlling and governing them. Let the Church rejoice, for He has her in His heart, and holds over her His ever-protecting arm. And even let sinners rejoice, for it is because God is what He is, the God of Patience and of Love, and because His government is what it is, that they still are spared as they are, and are dealt with as patiently as they are. And yet let them not presume. Let them not harden themselves under this divine leniency. God's government, as we have seen, is one, also, of power. There is retribution and wrath in it, at last, as well as love. Let them rejoice then that God has spared them as He has, that He is Love, that He has provided them a Saviour, that He offers them pardon, that He still waits to save them, and joyfully let them accept the salvation He offers. For let them know that this love of God if per-

sistently rejected will change into eternal divine anger, and all this divine power, now put forth to save them, will be employed to punish and eternally destroy them. Especially let the righteous, however, rejoice that God is on the throne. Their Father holds the reins of universal rule. They are safe, therefore, under His government. No weapon formed against them can prosper; no enemy can destroy them; no power can pluck them out of His hands or separate them from Him. The good work He has begun within them He will perfect. They are dear to Him as the apple of His eye. He allows sorrow, it is true, to come upon them, but it is always allowed only in love; is always sent only to purify and bless them. He sanctifies also their joy to them. In every experience of their life He leads, guides, strengthens, helps, comforts them. He is their God, their loving Father. Let the righteous therefore rejoice. For if God be for them, who can be against them?

And thus also let the Church rejoice that God reigns. There are times when evil seems

to be getting the upper hand in the world, when the devil appears to be getting the advantage of God, when the cause of holiness and truth seems to be losing ground, when the Kingdom of Christ appears to be suffering loss and going down before the attacks upon it of the kingdom of Satan. But let not the Church lose faith. God is on the throne. He holds the reins in His hands, and He will not let them go. He will cause all the wrath of man to praise Him. Above all this din and turmoil and strife and opposition and sin, sits God as the Omnipotent One, carrying out quietly His eternal plan with regard to our earth and man, and executing each moment His purposes especially concerning His Church and the Kingdom of His divine Son, Jesus Christ.

Be glad, therefore, at all time, O Church of Christ, in the consciousness of the love for thee and providence over thee of thy covenant-keeping God. In His hands thou art always safe. With Him as thy protector, thou hast nothing to fear even in the darkest hour. "The Lord reigneth; let the earth re-

joice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof." "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying: "Alleluia; for the Lord Omnipotent reigneth."

THE TESTIMONY OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

TEXT.

"He answered and said: Whether He be a sinner or no I know not. One thing I know: That, whereas I was blind, now I see."—John ix. 25.

Our text is the declaration, on the part of the man who had been blind but to whom the Saviour gave sight, of his consciousness, or personal assurance, that such a miracle had been wrought upon him and that he now actually did see. Two things, beyond a doubt, he knew, viz.: that once he was blind, and that now he could see. There were some things connected both with his past blindness and with his present sight which he did not, and could not, understand; but, with regard to the fact of each, he was positively and absolutely certain; he knew that once he could not see, and he knew that now he could see. Hence, in answer to all the cavils of the enemies of Jesus, and in answer to all his own doubts concerning him, and in answer

to all the questionings which arose in his mind concerning the nature of the miracle, or how Jesus wrought it, he fell back simply on the facts, on what he knew, in his personal consciousness, to be facts, and said: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

This assurance of this healed blind man of the reality of his cure, or this certainty in his own personal consciousness of the change which had been wrought by Christ upon him, I wish to use, today, as an illustration of what may be called: "The Testimony of Consciousness to our Personal Acceptance with God and our Heirship, through Jesus Christ, to Eternal Life."

There is such a thing as Personal Christian Assurance within ourselves that we are no longer in a State of Nature and Moral Death, but that we have been spiritually renewed, and are now in a State of Grace, and are Heirs, therefore, of Everlasting Life. With this healed blind man, speaking of our changed spiritual state, we can say: "One thing I know: that, whereas I was blind, now

I see." It is the testimony of our individual consciousness to our own renewed spiritual state.

Let us carefully together, today, consider this subject, and, for our instruction and spiritual benefit, learn from it all that we possibly can.

My proposition is that all real Believers in the Truth of God's Word, and all who truly, in an Evangelical sense, do believe in Christ Jesus, the Saviour who is offered to them in that Word, may also have within themselves, in their own personal consciousness, the assurance that they have thus believed, that what the Word of God declares is true, and that the Saviour who is there offered is, indeed, all that He is there declared to be, and that, because of their trust in Him, they are in a pardoned and saved state with God.

In considering this Proposition, let us endeavor

I. To prove it.
II. To guard it against error; and
III. To show its great value.

I. The fact that there is such a thing as Personal Assurance of Acceptance with God, can scarcely, I think, be doubted by any one who really receives the Scriptures. The consciousness of men is constantly, in Scripture, appealed to for Evidence of the Truth of God's Word, and especially of the certainty of their own justified relations to God.

Abel "obtained witness," we read, "that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts." Enoch walked with God, and, before his translation, he had this testimony that he pleased God. Noah also had divine testimony of his acceptance: "Thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation," said God to him. Abraham was called "the Friend of God." Job knew that his Redeemer lived, and that he should see him. Moses spoke face to face with God. David gives repeated evidence, in his Psalms, of his consciousness that God was his portion. Isaiah sings: "O Lord, I will praise Thee; though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortest me."

And, in the New Testament, Saints are described as being "filled with the Holy Ghost, and as rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Jesus says: "My peace I give unto you." "When He the Comforter is come He will lead you into all Truth; for He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you." Jesus also said to Peter: "Lovest thou me?" a most direct address to Peter's own inner spirit for the Evidence or for Proof of His love. And so, right here in the narrative of the cure of the blind man, we find the Saviour making an immediate appeal to the man's own consciousness, to his own knowledge of the state of his own heart in relation to Christ, asking him, as He did: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" And this was frequently done in the Ministry of Our Saviour. Jesus frequently thus threw men within and back on themselves, and put their own consciousness on the stand to witness with regard to Himself and their relations to Him.

And how repeated and positive the declarations also of Scripture upon this point!

How often, e. g., the Sacred Writers, speaking evidently out of their own experience, their own inner consciousness, use the expression: "I know," "we know," "we are persuaded," "we are sure."

Take, e. g., such passages as these: "We know that we have passed from death unto life;" "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day;" "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, and His love is perfected in us;" "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ."

And so in many other passages. There is everywhere a recognition of this Voice within; this Witness of the Spirit of God to the Truth and Reality of Religion, in the Souls of men; in a word, of the Testimony of Experience, of men's own consciousness that Christianity is true, and that they are, or are not, the Children of God.

And, besides, there are hundreds and

thousands of Christians, whose testimony is in all respects worthy of fullest credence, who possess this Assurance; who, by the Witness of the Spirit within their hearts, know that they are the Children of God; whose own Consciousness bears witness that Christianity is true, and that they themselves have been born of God and are heirs of heaven; who with the blind man of the text can say: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

The fact, therefore, I repeat, that there is such a thing as Christian Assurance, based upon personal religious experience; a Witness of the Holy Ghost to the inner spirit or soul of the renewed man; a testimony in the believer's individual consciousness of the truth as it is in Christ; all this, I say, cannot be denied. It is true. God's Word declares it. Christian Testimony, which cannot reasonably be doubted, confirms it.

It is necessary, however, now

II. Carefully to guard this Doctrine of the inner Witness of the Spirit, or of the Testimony of our own Consciousness, against the

gross Errors and Abuses to which it is liable.

I need scarcely say that there is, in this whole matter of the inner Witness of the Spirit, the very greatest danger of deception. Many, indeed, are, in respect to it, very greatly deceived. Much is received and believed to be the suggestion and the testimony of God's Holy Spirit, in men's hearts, which is nothing more than their own mere excited fancy, or carnal imaginings, and which, indeed, is often the wicked and foul suggestions even of Satan himself. Some of the most shocking immoralities, some of the most revolting crimes, some of the most cruel deeds that have ever darkened the pages of History, have been committed in the name of Religion, and were committed ostensibly or professedly under the suggestion or impulse of the Holy Spirit. Everyone, at all acquainted with History, well knows this. The dreadful horrors of the Inquisition; the shocking lewdness and immorality of the Fanatics, during the Period of the Reformation; the cruel burning of men

and women, and even little children, as witches; all these things have been done, and often sincerely, in the name of Religion and of Christianity, and, as men supposed, in obedience to the inner moving of the Holy Ghost. Jesus Himself says: "They shall put you out of the Synagogues; yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth will think that he doeth God's service." And Paul, concerning the Jews, says: "I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."

There is then, I repeat, danger of deception in this whole matter; and a man's feelings, his spirit within him, his consciousness, may tell him he is a Christian, a Child of God, and that he is doing God's service; and he may even have, at times, the highest kinds of so-called religious raptures and ecstasies, and swoons, and visions: there may, I say, be an inner witness, an internal testimony or consciousness of all this, and yet in it all there may not be the first particle of the work or grace of the Holy Spirit. The man's heart may, all the time, still be un-

renewed, and he may still be in his sins, and on the way to Eternal Death.

The question, then, may well be asked: —What constitutes a genuine inner Witness? How does the Holy Spirit bear to the Soul this inner Testimony, this self-authenticating Evidence, this Consciousness, amounting to Assurance, of which the Scriptures so often speak, that we are the Children of God: "new creatures in Christ Jesus," really born anew into the Kingdom of Grace? How? What are the "tests" by which I may safely know that I am not deceived, and that it is no false voice, but the real and true voice of God's Holy Spirit in my soul, which is thus speaking "peace" to me? In answer, I reply:—

a. That this "Testimony" or "Assurance," when truly that of the Holy Spirit, is always imparted or borne to the soul in connection with the Word of God; i. e., it comes from faith in the Word of God.

There is no such thing as the direct or immediate witnessing of the Holy Spirit, apart from, and without the medium and use of,

"the Word;" but always the Spirit bears witness through or by the Word. In all His operations upon the soul He thus acts through the instrumentality or agency of the Word or Truth. By the Word (and Sacrament, or Word in connection with the Water) He regenerates. "Born of water and the Spirit." "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." By the Word, also, the Holy Ghost sanctifies. "Sanctify them," prayed the Saviour, "by the Truth: Thy Word is Truth." And thus also by this written Word of God, the Word which the Holy Spirit Himself inspired, does the Holy Spirit bear witness or assurance of the reality or truth of the Word, and convey to the soul the spiritual blessings of peace, assurance, comfort, hope, joy, promised in the Word. Peace comes always by faith: faith in the Word, faith in the Christ revealed in the Word. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Thus by faith in the Word, the soul says

with the blind man: "I know that whereas I was blind now I see. I was blind in sin; in darkness with regard to God, and Christ, and my sins, and danger; I was in the thick gloom of spiritual night and death; but now I see; now I am in the light, in joy, in grace, in new life, in Christ!" How, I ask such a soul, how do you know that you are all this? How, or in what way does the Spirit of God bear to you the witness of all this? And the answer is: Through the Word. I believe this Word of God. I trust myself to this Christ whom this Word here reveals, and as He is here revealed: I comply with the Conditions of Pardon, and Acceptance, and Salvation, which are so plainly here laid down. The Spirit helps me to do so; and, as I do so, I have peace, I have hope, I have joy in my soul; I know that I am a Child of God, an Heir of heaven; for this is what God's Word promises to all who comply with these "conditions," to all who do thus trust themselves to Christ; and this, therefore, the Spirit now tells me is all mine, because I thus trust.

Thus the Spirit honors and uses His own inspired Word as a means of bestowing Assurance. Thus He bears witness, not by vision, or by some kind of subjective elevation, or mere natural rapture of soul into a clairvoyant state, but simply through the Truth, and by faith in the Truth. The Holy Spirit helps the soul to believe God's Word, to take God right at His word, and then because it has thus taken Him, it assures Him that he is a Child of God. In other words, this "Inner Witness" is the whispering of the Spirit of God's sure word of acceptance to the soul that is resting fully and only on that Written Word of God.

And I may here add that this inner witness is thus not only imparted or begotten in the soul through the medium of the objective word, but must be, and always also is, in entire harmony with that objective word. In the nature of things, the Holy Ghost being the Author of both, it must be so. The Spirit cannot contradict Himself. Hence, also, the written inspired word must ever be made the supreme measure and

moral test of all our inner experiences. "To the law and to the testimony," says Isaiah, "if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them." Abraham said unto the rich man in hell, concerning his five brethren yet on earth: "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them." Thus must all our so-called religious experiences ever harmonize with, and correspond with, the Written Word: not the Word interpreted by, and contorted, and wrenched out of its plain and true meaning, to be made to correspond with the arbitrary inner experience. Thus measured by God's Word, much that now passes for the highest and best kind of religious experience would fall to the ground. And then there is another test.

b. This inner Witness, where it is genuine, where it is indeed the Spirit's Witness, is always evidenced by a corresponding holy or truly Christian eternal life.

Where there is a true religious experience within, there will also, as certainly as shadow follows substance, be a godly deportment

without. A godly spirit, the Spirit of Christ Himself: godly words, godly dealings with his fellowmen, godly prayers, godly deeds, godly living.

It is all well enough for us as Christians to speak to each other of our experience; of what we know and feel in our hearts of the grace of God. But, after all, the best evidence that a man is indeed a Christian, is found, not so much in how he feels, as in how he lives. The life is the proof. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Let me see how you live; acquaint me with your temper, your words, your actions, your daily conduct as a Christian; let me know how faithful or unfaithful in all the duties of Scriptural piety you are; what kind of a husband, or wife, or son or daughter you are. Let me see how square in your dealings you are. Show me all this; and then I will know, and then the world also will know, and then you yourself also will know whether you are a Christian or not. For where the heart is changed and right, the outer life will also be right. Where there is a true inner Witness

there will always also be the godly life as an outer Witness. Nor is, you may rest assured, the inner true if the outer is wanting. The Holy Spirit would not thus contradict Himself: whispering "peace" to the soul within, and yet allowing it to live in sin without. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Wherefore," says Christ, and let us mark well His words, "by their fruits ye shall know them."

Let no one, then, deceive himself into the belief that his inner Witness is the Witness of the Holy Spirit, unless it possesses these two positive and essential evidences; viz., first, that it is born of the Word of God, viz., "not of corruptible seed," as St. Peter expresses it, "but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." And then, secondly, that it is attended by a godly, consistent, and faithful Christian Life. For he that possesses these is not deceived. He who has these can, in truth, with this healed blind man say: "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I

see." But if he possesses not these, then he is deceived, be his pretentions to religious experience what they may. "He that lacketh these things is blind."

But let us now yet consider:

III. The value of this Testimony of Consciousness, or of Experience, both to the Truth of Christianity, and to the Reality of our own Personal Piety.

This Consciousness that we are the Children of God is of inexpressible value. To have, not the Hope only, but the Assurance, the positive testimony within ourselves, wrought there by the Holy Spirit, that we have indeed passed from death unto life, this is of infinite worth. To be able to say: "I know it is so: the Spirit bears witness, through the Word, with my spirit, that I am a Child of God." Oh that is the richest blessing which the soul, this side of heaven, can enjoy. In every way it is unspeakably valuable. It is valuable because it is

1. A Confirmation of God's own Written Word.

It is the testimony of our own experience

to the truth of what God, in His Word, promises to all who will, with full confidence, commit themselves to His mercy through Christ. In such experience "we therefore, set to our seal that God is true," and that His Word is true. And thus we, in the strongest possible manner, commend the Word of God to others.

2. It is valuable also as a Source of inexpressible personal comfort and joy to ourselves.

Think, for a moment, what all is implied in such an Assurance: pardon, peace with God, grace to help in every need, adoption into the family of God, certainty of heaven, all this. How blessed the condition of the soul that has, from day to day, within itself the consciousness that all this belongs to it. What peace and comfort, and strength, and joy, and hope, and heaven, are all his, and must, in the nature of the case, be his who thus takes in the fact, and lives in the consciousness and realization of the truth that all this is, indeed, through Christ, his relation to God. Such a soul enjoys heaven

already on earth. And, day by day, he can sing:

"The opening heavens around me shine
With beams for sacred bliss,
When Jesus shows His heart is mine,
And whispers I am His."

Is such an Assurance, such a Consciousness, not, then, valuable?

3. But it is valuable, also, as an Incentive to Christian Activity.

Then man who thus has this sense of his Adoption, and who thus, in his own heart, experiences the blessedness of pardoned sin and of hope through Christ, is moved, by his own experience, to tell others, to tell even the whole world of this precious Saviour, of this gracious, loving, God, of this comfort and joy of a Christian life, and bring them all, if possible, also to know, and possess, and enjoy them. The Love of Christ, thus dwelling in their own souls, constrains them to have others also taste and be filled with it. And hence, also, it is those Christians who, in some degree, at least, have this Assurance of their own acceptance, who are,

also, the most active and earnest in efforts to lead others to the Saviour. This is always so.

4. And then this Consciousness, or this Experience of the Grace of God in our hearts, is valuable, also, as an element of success in our efforts to lead others to the Saviour. There is no testimony so convincing, so piercing, and persuasive, and irresistible as the testimony of Experience. When a man, if he is at all a man of truth, tells you: "I know such a thing is true because I myself have tried it, I experienced it, I myself passed through it, and have, here in myself, the proof of it," you must believe him. It is the testimony not of argument, or theory, or speculation, or hearsay, but of direct personal Experience, and you cannot doubt it.

And so in the matter of Religion. The testimony of Experience is powerful. It goes right down into men's hearts. It silences all their objections. It dumfounds all their cavils. It hushes them. It does more: it convinces them; it melts, persuades, wins them.

And, then, there is power in this testimony

of consciousness for another reason; viz., a man tells what he has himself actually experienced so differently from what he tells that which he has not himself experienced. He tells it positively, earnestly, as a living reality before and within his own soul; and the very way in which he thus tells it, carries conviction of the truth of what he declares, and leads men to accept, and believe, and do what he says. Yes, the man who, when he talks to others about Christ, and tries to lead them to Christ, can say: "I myself know this Christ; I have experienced His grace; I know in my own heart what a precious Saviour He is;" that man, in this his ability thus to speak from personal experience, will speak with a power which otherwise he could not possibly possess; and he also, because of this power, will be the means of leading many to Jesus.

But once more:

5. This Consciousness of our Acceptance with God is invaluable in view of Death and of the Future Life which is before us all.

It disarms Death of its terrors, and takes

away all fear of meeting God in Judgment. It fills the future with light, and hope, and causes the soul to feel that dying is but going home. Assured of its acceptance with God the soul, in a dying hour, can sing.

Blessed, then, for all these reasons, is the man who has this Witness of the Holy Spirit, within his own heart that he is a Child of God. Blessed is any one, whether man or woman or little child, who, moved by the Holy Ghost, and in humble obedience to the Inspired Word, has, in penitence and faith, gone to the Siloam Pool of the Saviour's blood, and has there washed, and is now able, out of his own undoubting Consciousness, and as the deep Conviction of his own individual Experience, to say, in the clear confidence of this healed and glad blind man: "Many things about this Christ and about Christianity I do not know; but one thing I do know:—I once was blind, but now I see, and it was He, Jesus the Christ, who made me thus to see. All glory to His Name for what He has done for my soul."

GOD'S ANGELS MEETING US IN THE WAY.

TEXT.

"And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him."—Genesis xxxii. 1.

For twenty-one years Jacob had been an exile in the land of Padan Aram. They had been years of many and strange vicissitudes. They were marked by numerous and painful experiences. But the experiences, through which God thus, in these years, led him, had proved a blessing to him. He had been brought to repentance of the great wrong, both against his father and brother, which he had committed. He had been chastened into a new and holier character. He was no longer Jacob, the Deceiver, "the Supplanter," but he was now Israel, a spiritual Prince, having power both with God and with men.

By divine command, he was now returning to his native land; going back to the old

home, whence, twenty-one years before, he had fled to escape the rage of Esau whom he had so grossly wronged. God, we read, had said unto him: "Return unto thy country and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee."

Thus journeying, and having with him his household and all his possessions, he came into the neighborhood of the little brook called Jabbok, east of the river Jordan. It was to him a time of deep and anxious thought; a moment of great perplexity and fear. Not far from where he thus was, Esau, his brother, resided, the head now of a great and warlike tribe, and remembering, doubtless, the old wrong which Jacob had done him.

Thinking of all this, and fearing not only for his own life, but especially for the lives of his loved ones, Jacob was filled with forebodings of impending evil, and trembled lest he and his be together destroyed.

But God's eye was on him. God was his keeper. God's "Angels" were sent to him, to preserve him in this hour of his peril; to be

his defenders; to comfort him in his sorrow; to guide him safely through the danger to which he was thus exposed. "And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him." And when Jacob saw them he said: "This is God's host;" and he called the name of that place "Mahanaim;" that is two hosts.

All this, at first thought, impresses us as an unusual and singular occurrence. To read that God's Angels thus met Jacob, as he journeyed there on the way, and became as it were a divine body-guard all around him, to keep him, this seems, at first, strange and remarkable. And yet it is really not an unusual occurrence. It is something which is happening all the time; happening to each one of us, as much as here to Jacob; happening not once only, but often and constantly.

Like Jacob we are all journeying; journeying towards eternity. Like Jacob we come also here and there, in this journey of life which we are making, to certain perilous and critical points: to the "crossings" of certain dangerous streams, like the stream Jabbok or the river Jordan, "crossings" where we are

in greatest peril of being overcome by spiritual foes, and crushed by the evils and ills of life. And like Jacob, we are also at such times, met, and helped, and defended, and often saved by the angels of God.

God's angels are probably thus even bodily and literally round about us, as our helpers and defenders. It becomes us, I know, to speak modestly upon this point, and not to announce as a positive Scripture dogma that which the Scriptures have not thus with absolute dogmatic positiveness announced. And yet, on the other hand, we must not forget that neither do the Scriptures deny as a fact such literal and bodily angelic presence and ministry. They leave it to us at least as an open question. Personally I incline to accept it.

We do not, I know, as Jacob here did, see the angels of God about us or hear them speak, or catch visions of their radiant forms, as they are round about us. But still, of the real, literal nearness and presence of God's angels, at least occasionally, in any great emer-

gency or crisis in our life time as God's children here on earth, I do not doubt. They were, I know, thus really and visibly here, at the crossing of Jabbok, with Jacob; with Elisha at Dothan; with Hagar in the wilderness; with Peter in the prison; with Paul in the storm at sea; with the dying beggar Lazarus at the gate of the Rich Man; with Jesus, the Master, at His advent, in His temptation, in His Agony, at His Resurrection, at His Ascension.

And why not, then, I would ask, really and literally, although invisibly, also with us, the children of God? Does not God's Word say that "they are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who are the heirs of salvation?" Does it not assure us that "angels of the Lord campeth round about the righteous and delivereth them?" Does not Christ also declare concerning little children "that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven?" Do we not read that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth?" Was it not an "angel of the

Lord" that on Mount Moriah addressed Abraham; that rebuked Balaam; that appeared to Manoah; that encouraged Gideon; that communed with Joshua; that made annunciation of the Saviour's birth to Mary; that appeared to Joseph? Is not the Scripture full of recitals of angelic visits to our earth; of angelic interviews, and angelic ministries to God's people? What reason to assume that all this angelic "ascending and descending," spoken of so often in Scripture, has wholly ceased? Where has God intimated that angelic visitors no longer come to our earth? Why should they not now, in critical hours of our life, as well as in the life-time of saints of old, come, and, invisibly, yet mightily, comfort and strengthen and guide us? Why put heaven all at once so far away? Why thus sunder the communion between the church above and the church below? No; No! The poet, I believe, is right when he says:

"Millions of spiritual beings walk the earth
unseen
Both when we wake and when we sleep."

Literally and really, then, I believe, that as there, at the Jordan, they met Jacob, and helped him through his peril, and brought him on his way, so do God's Angels from heaven, sent to us by our Heavenly Father, now meet us, and help us in our times of crisis and special need. Why not?

Figuratively, however, we certainly may apply these words of our text to ourselves. For everything that comes to us in life is really, if we but know it, "an angel, a messenger, a providence, of God." Nothing, as we know, comes to us outside of the circle of His "Providence"; nothing that He does not either wisely permit or cause. So that we can truthfully sing:

"In each event of life how clear
Thy ruling hand I see;
Each blessing to my soul more dear
Because bestowed by Thee."

We do not always, I know, thus recognize the experiences of life as angels sent to us from God. They often do not, at first seem to us like angels at all; much less like God's

angels. They seem to us something else and less than God. In our spiritual blindness and practical atheism, we call them by other names. We speak of them as mere "occurrences," "accidents," "chances," "happenings," "incidents" only of our life. But still rightly interpreted, every event and every experience in our life is nevertheless a veritable "angel of God." God's Providence is with us all and over us all, in all our ways.

Illustrations of this angelic ministry abound in the life of each one of us. All along in the line of our past history, as we, in our later years, review it, we can see certain places, and certain critical points, where these good angels of God met us, and talked to us, and helped us on in our way.

Around the Virgin and Child Jesus, in Raphael's Madonna, the air, you remember, is represented as being full of attendant guardian angels. So also around us, and around every Christian, there are doubtless multitudes of these same angelic ministers; call them by what name you will, "angels," "providences," "laws," "miracles;" but divine agen-

cies they all are, of some kind; by which, and in which, God met us, here or there, in the pathway of life, and gave shape and direction to our history different from what it otherwise would have been.

The mountain at Dothan was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha: angels of God, a great host, ready to defend and help him in the peril which threatened him. And did also defend and help him.

Thus surrounded by angelic hosts, by protecting and guiding and helping agencies of God, are we, at every step of our path-way of life. Like Elisha's servant, our eyes often have been closed, and we have failed to see them, even with the eye of faith. But still they have been ever with us, and have met us in the way.

Once, for example, you were young. Life spread itself out in beautiful and attractive prospect before you. You had early decided what your course in life would be. You would be this, you would make of yourself this or that, you would fill this or that position, your plans were all fixed, your way of

life was all marked out, and you were, like Jacob, "going on in the way."

But, as you were thus going on in the way, something happened which at once changed your whole course, which gave to your life a wholly new turn, which led you out in an an entirely different direction from that in which you before were. It was a little thing perhaps in itself that thus changed the current of your life, a mere "accident," or "chance," seemingly, something which you at the time thought little or nothing about, but which now, in looking back upon it, you can easily see was the factor or the unseen power which determined your whole after course of life, and which really led you to become what and who and where you to-day are.

That seemingly little incident which thus befell you, and thus determined your life-course, was, however, no chance work; no accident merely; no mere human agency; but it was one of God's angels. As here the Angels of God met Jacob, so the Angels of God met you there in the way. You had come

to one of life's crossings, you needed direction, the choice you would have made, if left to yourself, would not have tended to your highest good, and so the Angels came to you; came in the form of some mere occurrence or incident of life, and led you in a different and better way. "There is a Divinity shapes our ends; rough hew them as we will." "Man proposes but God disposes." "The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

Take, however, another illustration. At some point or period of your past life, you were in great danger of making moral shipwreck of yourself. You were a young man. You had fallen into certain company which would soon have led you astray. You were beginning certain habits which would soon have proved your ruin. It was a critical moment in your moral history. It was one of your life's decisive crossings; a moral pivot, upon which hung your whole subsequent character, your destiny for this life and the next. But God's Angels met you. In the form of "Con-

science" speaking to you; or of "Memory" recalling the words often spoken by a pious father or mother; or in the kind interest taken in you by some Christian friend; or in some other form, God's Angels came to you, meeting you there in the way, warning you and turning you aside from the precipice of moral ruin upon whose brink you then stood.

And, by these angels of God, thus meeting, and warning, and revealing to you your danger, your peril, you were saved. You drew back. You broke away from the temptation. You began another and better life. A gentleman recently told me that, when a young man, tempted by companions, he was once induced to enter a drinking saloon and call for liquor. The strong drink was poured out. It sparkled in the tumbler or cup before him. He took it up. He was in the act of putting it to his lips and drinking it. It was his first glass. But, as he raised it, and was thus about to drink it, his eye looked into it, and there, reflected from the face of that liquor, looking up as it were, from the bot-

tom of the glass, he saw, as plainly as could be, the pleading face, or image, of his sainted mother. At once he again set it down. He left it untasted, his first and also his last glass. God's Angels had met him. They had shown him his danger, and saved him.

And so with many. They are going into the ways of sin; they are already far gone on the way; utterly worldly, wicked, living without God in the world, unconcerned for their salvation, hastening onward thoughtless and unprepared towards eternity.

But now the Angels of God meet them in the way. The Angel, for example, of reflection, the Angel of God's Word, the Angel of the Holy Spirit, the Angel of the Gospel Ministry, the Angel of Awakening, and Conviction, and Prayer, and repentance, and Faith. These all "meet him," as he walks there in the way of death, lead him to think, make him stop, show him his guilt and peril, direct him to Christ, and save him.

Thus God's Angels are probably meeting and speaking to some wayward and wandering souls here, in the sanctuary now. Prob-

ably some who are now here, have under temptation gone down into the very depths of sin, and have gotten far away from God; and now, as they sit here in God's House, and the truth is preached, the Angel of God's Holy Spirit, the Angel of an Awakened Conscience, the Angel of Conviction and Repentance, these "Angels" of God are here meeting them, and tenderly remonstrating with them, and pleading with them to come back again to God, to accept Christ, to be saved. Is it so? Are there such convicted souls here, this evening, in this House of God? To all such, if there be any, let me urgently say: "Hear what these Angels of God thus say to you. Obey their loving exhortation. Do what they bid you. It is for the salvation of your own soul that they thus plead. Hear, therefore, and live.

But, God's Angels meet us in other forms. Sometimes they meet us in the form of direct Providences. We are walking on in life, all absorbed in present things: our affections and thoughts wholly given up to the gain

and pleasures of this world, forgetful of the great and eternal hereafter, and in danger, therefore, of losing our souls.

Then, to save us, God's Angels come to us. They meet us in the way.

The name of the Angel that thus meets us may be "Sickness." It takes us away from the busy scenes of the world. It shuts us up for awhile in retirement. It makes us hold still and think upon our condition. It talks to us. It tells us anew all about God, and about the Saviour, and about our Sins, and our Souls, and our duty. It saves us.

Or, the Angel that thus meets us may perhaps bear the name of "Adversity." Riches may take to themselves wings and fly away. Enemies may rise up against us. Friends may forsake us. Business enterprises may disappoint us. All things may go against us. Our way may be all shut up against us. It is one of God's Angels in the way. He is sent to show us the vanity of earth; the folly of living only for this life; the duty of setting our affections on things above.

Or, once more, the name of the Angel that

thus meets us in the way, may, perhaps, be Bereavement. Death perhaps enters your home. Your loved one is taken away from you. The vacant chair, the silent instrument,, the unoccupied chamber, all remind you of your painful loss. Your heart is sad and almost crushed under the blow. But it is an Angel of God that has, in that hour of bereavement, come to your home. It is all the dealing with you of Divine Love. It is the visit to you of a heavenly messenger: a messenger whom God has sent to soften your heart, to lead you to think of death and of the life to come, to lift your affections away from earth to heaven and to the better and glorious things of Eternity.

But, at such times, we have, also, other angelic visitors. God's Angels of Comfort also meet us in the way. Bereaved and broken-hearted, weeping and walking in darkness, Messengers of Divine Consolation, Angels of Heavenly Grace also then wing their way to us, to solace us and to console us in our grief. And blessed are the lessons which they then whisper to us: lessons of the Wis-

dom of God, and of the love of God, in all His sore dealings with us: lessons, also, of submission, of trust, of hope; breathing a sweet spirit of resignation into our souls, calming our agitated emotions, healing our wounded spirits, clearing our vision, and enabling us to look out through and beyond the darkness around us, and there, in the light of God's love, and in the light of Eternity to see that it is all right and good. Blessed be God for these dear comforting Angels that thus when we journey in sorrow, "meet us in the way," and then thus point us upward to "the Better Life."

"Though strange and winding seems the way,
While yet on earth I dwell,
In heaven my heart shall gladly say,
Thou, God, dost all things well."

But, once more: these "Angels of God" come to us sometimes also in the form only of a good thought, of a better desire or feeling, than before possessed us. A man, for example, living in sin, or in religious indiffer-

ence, all at once, is filled with a strange dissatisfaction with himself, an inexplicable unrest of soul, an overpowering sense of the emptiness of the life he is living, an inextinguishable longing after something holier and better than he now has, a deep, inner yearning after God, and after that which is good. He cannot account for his feelings. They come over him, he says, almost against his will. When he is alone, when he is awake at night, often, indeed, right in the midst of his course of sin, they come unbidden over him, and he feels himself, like the Prodigal, strangely drawn to arise and go back to his forsaken Father and God.

Whence come such better thoughts as these? Why does he feel thus? Simply, I answer, because then the good "Angels of God" are meeting him in the way, and are trying to save him. Simply because then God Himself, by the Angel of the Holy Spirit, is speaking to him.

Thus is our life, full of these Angelic Visitants. To us as to Jacob, God's Host come, as we journey in life's way, to check, divert,

direct, guard, strengthen, comfort, help, save us.

Learn to look for and see an angel of God in everything that befalls us in life. "God's Angels," as we have seen, come to us disguised. They do not always openly declare and show themselves as angels of God. Let us then, try to discover them. Let us seek in every experience of life to find them out. Let us look for these hidden and veiled messengers of God: in every joy, in every sorrow, in every prosperity, in every adversity, in every turn and new experience of life. Doing so, cultivating the habit of doing so, we will also, constantly, along life's pathway, find them. We will discover them, day after day, all around us: going before us, hovering over us, the very Host of God, Mahanaim, encamping round about us and doing us good. And what a charm, what a spiritual sweetness, what a blessed divine communion and fellowship, what a joyous feeling of security and comfort, what a precious bringing down of heaven to earth, this consciousness of God's Angels, yea, of God Himself, being

thus all around us, all this would throw over our life! Let us try it. And thus let us make our life here full of the angelic fellowship and full of companionship with God Himself. Says Dr. Charles Hodge, "As far back as I can remember, I had the habit of thanking God for everything I received, and of asking Him for everything that I wanted. If I lost a book or any one of my playthings, I prayed that I might find it. I prayed walking along the streets, in school and out of school, whether playing or studying. I did not do this in obedience to any prescribed rule—it seemed natural. I thought of God as an everywhere present being, full of kindness and love, who would not be offended if children talked to Him." We here learn, also,

How submissive under all life's afflictions, in view of this truth, we should all be. Nay, how joyful we should even be. For what are the afflictions of life? They are only the Angels of God—sent down to chasten us into holiness; to purify us from earth's dross and fit us for heaven. Thus, then, let us regard

them, and not only submit to them, but even rejoice in them, knowing that they work out for us "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And once more we learn yet this lesson, namely,

The duty of promptly following all these good leadings of God's Angels. These good thoughts within us; these ministrations of Grace and Providence, brought thus to bear upon us; these angelic and divine drawings of our souls heavenward, these, my hearers, follow. These obey. They come to you in love. They are God's angels, meeting you in the way, in order to save you. Follow them. Follow Conscience; follow the Word of God; follow the blessed Holy Spirit; follow the leadings of Providence. They are all white-robed "Angels of God." Follow them.

CONCERNING OUR TEMPTATIONS.

TEXT.

"And lead us not into temptation."—Matthew vi. 13.

It is well, right at the commencement of our remarks, to notice that in this petition: "And lead us not into temptation," our Saviour does not teach us to pray for exemption from temptation, or that we may never at all be tempted. For this, in the first place, would be to pray for something which, under the circumstances, would be a moral impossibility. Being what man is, viz., a free moral agent, and living as he does, in a world full of every species of sin, and above all, being accessible by Satan, the great Author of all moral evil, man cannot otherwise than be subject to temptation. It is incidental to his very character and condition. It grows necessarily from the very constitution of his being. His very liberty of will, his moral freedom, his very power of choosing, demands temptation; demands it in order to give that

liberty opportunity to exercise itself, and in order to test that capacity to choose, and thus reveal innate moral character. Total exemption from temptation is, therefore, in the nature of the case, to man as a free moral agent, an absolute moral impossibility.

But, even if total exemption from temptation were possible, it is manifestly not desirable. For who would wish to be deprived of the noble freedom to choose either good or evil, with which God has created us? Who would desire that that liberty of will, which elevates him above irrational creation, and which allies him to angels, to God, and immortality, should be blotted out, and that he should be reduced to the level of the brute in the order of being, and be controlled only by instinct or by mere arbitrary law? Who, in a word, would not rather be in this respect just what God has made him, viz. capable of being tempted, and capable of sinning, and capable even of eternally perishing, rather than to be, like the irrational animal, or like the tree, or rock, or flower, or bird, incapable of intelligent choice and self-determi-

nation. No one. We all feel that our very revelation of the dignity and elevation of our superiority in the scale of being, that it is a revelation of the dignity and elevation of our moral natures, that it is a picture to us and to the universe, of the image and likeness of God himself in which he created us, and we rejoice in it.

Christ, then, does not here teach us to ask in prayer that we may never be tempted, we may feel sure, for this would be no blessing but an injury to us. Temptation is moral discipline; is a means to the production of a virtuous and pious character, and is, therefore, a necessary help to Salvation. And hence Jesus, in His "intercessory prayer" recorded in John 17, does not pray that His disciples may be "taken out of the world," i. e. away from all possibility of temptation to evil, but He only prays that they may be kept from the power of the evil that is in the world.

And, right here, it may be well to note that, being as he is and forever also will continue to be, viz., a free moral agent, man

always will possess this capacity of being tempted, and hence the ability also, if left to himself, of sinning. Adam possessed it in Eden, and, tempted by Satan, yielded and fell. Satan, an exalted angel, being free, possessed it even in Heaven, and even there he had within himself, and unseduced to it from without, the power of originating sin; of tempting and destroying himself. Even in Heaven itself then, if left to himself, and not kept by the special Grace or Power of God, man may be tempted, and sin, and perish. But he will not there be left to himself. He will there be kept both from being tempted and sinning. But his safety will not lie in the place, nor in the surroundings of the redeemed Souls, nor in the superior strength of moral character, or virtue, or holiness, which in himself he will then possess, but in the preserving Grace of Christ, of which, throughout all Eternity, he will, be, as he is now, the recipient. By that he will be kept so that, even in Heaven, every redeemed Soul will forever have occasion, with adoring gratitude, to exclaim: "I am saved, saved

from falling, as Satan once, even here in Heaven, fell; but saved only by Grace. I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life which I now live, I live by the Faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Our blessed Redeemer, in this petition: "And lead us not into temptation," means, we may now remark, to teach us to pray that we may not be overcome with temptation. It is a prayer not against the existence but against the power of temptation. It is an acknowledgment to God of our own moral weakness, of the might and malignity of our spiritual foes, and of the consciousness of danger if left to battle with sin in our own unaided strength. It is saying to Him: "Oh God, abandon us not to temptation; leave us not alone to meet it. Be Thou, the Almighty One, our shelter and refuge and help in the midst of it. Lead us safely and triumphantly through it." This is the meaning of the petition, "And lead us not into temptation."

The language of our text, at first view,

seems to imply that God is the Author of our temptations; that it is He that leads us into them. But God never allures any one to sin. He acts the part of tempter to no one. He is holy. He everywhere forbids, condemns, punishes and declares His hatred against sin He is not, nor can He be, in any way either the author of approver of sin. And, ever since sin has entered the universe, He has done everything compatible with His own perfections, and with man's freedom, to restrain, suppress, abolish it. And hence, in the language of Saint James: "let no man, when he is tempted, say, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempted He any man."

God, then, is not the source of our temptations. He leads no one into them. They spring from our own depraved natures. They come to us from the world of sin around us. They originate especially with Satan, the dark Prince of the Power of the Air; the malignant Spirit that now, and always, "worketh in the children of disobedience." These are the sources of our temptations.

But, while God is not the author of our temptations, He yet permits them. Sin, Satan, and our own lusts, God permits to be sources of temptation. These He suffers to exist as tempters to us, in order by them to reveal and develop each man's true character; in order to show to him and to others just what is in the human heart; in order to test his virtue; in order to prove him. For who knows himself until temptation and trial of character show him what he is, what wickedness he is capable of, what latent depravity lies buried within his heart. Look, for example, over History, and see how men that were supposed, by themselves and by others, to be models of virtue and integrity of character, when once they were brought into positions and places of trial or temptation, revealed a character just the reverse. Solomon, for instance, was a very different man in the early part of his reign from what he was in those voluptuous after-periods of his history during which he brought such reproach upon the throne. Nero was a very different man

while he was the pupil of Seneca, from what he was in those days when he was Emperor of Rome. Hazael, the subject, was a very different man from Hazael, the prince. How different Mary, the youthful Queen of England, the translator of the Gospels, the supposed humble and pious Christian, from Mary, the cruel persecutor of the Church, the hater of Protestantism, and the one whom history has handed down to the horror of succeeding ages under the dread appellation of "Bloody Mary." And see Robespierre, at first, and when yet untried, regarded by all as even feminine in the tenderness of his nature, so sensitive to the sufferings of his fellowmen that he resigned a lucrative office, rather than condemn a culprit to the gallows, and yet afterward, when once he held the reins of supreme power, and there was naught to restrain him, how he proved himself to be a very incarnation of cruelty, filling all Paris and France with blood. And so with men everywhere. And so it is with all of us.. We do not know ourselves, not one of us, until we are tempted and our

character tried. The strength of the Forest-oak is unknown until the hurricane sweeps around it, and with its mighty breath of storm, wrestles with it. The power of the bridge that spans the river is unknown until that river, swollen suddenly by heavy rains, rises and sweeps its mad currents down upon it. And just so no man's virtue, no man's moral strength, no man's piety, no man's honesty or purity, is known, or can be known, either to himself or to others, until temptations test him, and prove him, and reveal him just as he is. Hence the duty of humility. Hence the duty, also, of charity towards those that fall.

Whilst God then, is not the author of temptations, He yet permits them, and by them He suffers man to exercise his free agency, gives him an opportunity to develop a virtuous character, and thus subjects him to that moral discipline which tests his allegiance to God, and his meetness for Heaven.

And hence, since all men need temptations, all men also have their temptations, and every man also has his own peculiar

temptations. We may imagine, and I suppose we all often do imagine, that our condition is one of special trial, and that, if we could only occupy our neighbor's place, and be subject to his temptations and trials, we should live much better moral and christian lives. But this is all delusion. Temptations and trials are the lot of every human being. The rich man has his special temptations. Wrapped round with ease, flushed with wealth, and supplied with abundance, he is tempted to forget his dependence upon God, to waste his life in splendid idleness, to weaken his soul by indulgence in luxury, and to become vain and inflated with pride. And so has the poor man his special temptations. As many everywhere well know poverty has its trials: its fretful cares, its gloomy distrusts, its painful sense of weakness, its social bitterness, its tendency to discontent, to envy, to repining against the government of God. And so has the business man his peculiar temptations: his haste to grow rich, his provocations with unprincipled competition, his trials with employees, his exhausting worries,

his perplexing cares, his close and hot contacts with selfishness in himself and others. And so has the scholar or student his peculiar temptations: his perplexing doubts, his sceptical suggestions, his pride of intellect, his selfish thirst for earthly fame. And even old age has its temptations, and its peculiar sins. The sinners of the Bible are not by any means all young sinners. Many of them were well on in years. Solomon is a noted example. So is Noah; so is Lot; so is David. Paul and Barnabas were not boys when they quarreled. The prophet who led the young prophet to disobey God, was an old prophet. And so I repeat, has each man his own peculiar spiritual trials. So are all conditions, and all places, and all employments in life and all periods of life, beset with temptations. And if anyone, therefore, thinks that by changing his condition in life he will free himself from this exposure to temptation, he makes a great mistake. For, let his condition in life be what it will, let his sphere or place be where it will, there temptations will also follow him, and assail him, and there

will he still have need to cry: "And lead us not into temptation."

It may also be noticed that not only will every man have his temptations, but every man also will have them in his weakest point. Where the wall of the besieged fortress is weakest, there the guns are made to pour their fiercest volleys of shot; and where the ranks of the marshalled army are most thinned, there the charging columns most concentrate and seek to gain the victory. And so in each man's weakest moral point, (and there is such a weakest point in every man's nature) Satan, and the world, and his own depravity, most violently assail him and seek to overcome him. And hence the great importance of each man thoroughly knowing himself, and, where he is weakest, there also rally his strongest defensive moral forces and there exercise his greatest vigilance.

And yet men also often fail where they are strongest. Elijah, on Carmel, was an exponent of courage; soon he lies there under the juniper-tree, an exponent of despair. John was the disciple of love; yet, in wrath

he asks Christ to call down fire upon the Samaritan village which had refused to receive them. David was eminent for personal holiness; and yet he goes down, under temptation, into basest sensuality. Moses was noted for his meekness; and yet how angry he became. Solomon was renowned for his wisdom; and yet, in his later life, how foolishly he behaved.

These extremes, visible in human life, teach us not to put too much trust in ourselves, but to trust in God's restraining and sustaining Grace only.

But what, let us now ask, is the measure of the extent of our responsibility in connection with our temptations? It is determined, I answer, by our own voluntary moral attitude towards them and our own personal disposal of them. It is no sin to be tempted, but it is sin to harbor temptation; to cherish it lovingly in our hearts, to yield to it, to obey it. There is where the sin begins. As another has said: "We cannot hinder the birds from flying over our heads, but we can hinder them from

building their nests in our hair." And so we cannot prevent temptation from assailing us, but we can, by God's Grace, prevent it from injuring us. We can battle against it, we can resist it, we can say as Jesus said: "Get thee behind me Satan, for thou savorest not the things that be of God." We are not responsible for our temptations no more than Jesus was when He was tempted, until we yield to them; until, in our hearts, we cherish them, or love them, or desire them, and thus voluntarily make them our own. This is a great comforting fact. Let us not forget it. Let no tempted soul, therefore, that earnestly battles against evil thoughts and suggestions of his heart, be troubled with the fear that, because he is thus tempted he is no Christian. Temptations in themselves prove nothing, as regards personal character, one way or the other. It is the disposal which a man makes of his temptations, which shows what he is, which proves whether he is a Christian or not. And hence the very fact that we do resist temptations to sin; that our wills refuse to yield to them;

that, as Christians, we pray and weep and war against them; all this is proof of Grace within us, and is evidence that we are Christians; disciples of that Savour who was Himself "tempted in all points even as we are, yet without sin." And, being thus an evidence of a work of Grace, we ought, as the Apostle says: "count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations," knowing that temptations prove us, develop us, strengthen us; and remembering that temptation itself is no sin; that simply to be tempted does not make us guilty; and that it is only when we adopt the temptation, approve of it, love it, yield to it, only then it becomes ours, and only then we become guilty.

The means of overcoming temptation, or the means of avoiding being overcome by it, which God has placed within our power, are, I may now yet, in conclusion, remark, various.

a. The first and best means of all, if possible, is to avoid meeting temptation. Our duty is, neither to be nor go nor stay anywhere where temptation will be likely to as-

sail us. For to go into the way of sin is really to tempt ourselves; and then if we thus throw ourselves into the way of temptation, it is not the Devil or the world that tempts us, but we ourselves become the tempters of ourselves.

In order, then, to avoid temptation, unless duty calls you, go not in the way of temptation. Control your eyes. Rule your ears. Govern your feet. Bridle your tongue. Curb your passions. Say to them all: "Enter not into the path of the wicked; go not in the way of evil men; avoid it, pass not by it, turn away from it, and pass away." This is the especial safety of the young. Thus avoid the theatre, the billiard room, the gaming table, the liquor saloon, the evil companion, the bad book. Touch not, taste not, handle not; see not, hear not; then only are you safe. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."

b. A second great aid to overcome temptation is to cultivate an abiding sense of God's observing presence.

The murderer, as with stealthy tread he

creeps, at the still hour of midnight, towards his victim, forgets that God sees him. Did he but remember that, he would at once be moved to turn back from his crime. Did he but look up, and, in that lonely star that breaks through the rifted cloud above him, see, as he ought to see, the eye of Omniscience flashing down upon him; and hear, as he ought to hear, God's voice saying to him, "Thou shalt not kill;" at once his benumbed conscience would awake, his bloody purpose would flee from his heart, and he would shrink from the commission of the dreadful deed. And so with all of us. We commit sin; we trifle with and yield to temptation; we indulge in evil thoughts and words and deeds, all because we forget that everywhere and always God is near us, that God sees and hears and knows us, and that God, according to our life now, will hereafter judge and reward us. To be delivered from being overcome by temptation, let us all hourly then, with Hagar, remember, "Thou God seest me;" with Joseph, when tempted, let us think of God, and say: "How

can I do this great evil and sin against God."

c. A third means of avoiding being overcome by temptation, is watchfulness. Soldiers, by watching for the foe, escape surprise and defeat. Sailors, by watching, escape the dangerous rocks. Firemen, by watching, perceive the first symptoms of the kindled and destroying flame. And so all who wish to escape being overcome by temptation, and especially by temptations to whatever is your besetting sins, must watch. You must be upon your constant guard. You must be vigilant against sin. Knowing your weakness, knowing the strength and skill of your foes, your eye must ever be open, your ear must be ever quick to detect the slightest sound, and your hand and tongue and heart must be ever in an attitude of brave and earnest defense. Remember the words of the Master: "What I say unto you, I say unto all, watch." And especially must we watch against little sins, beginnings of evil.

d. A fourth aid by which to resist tempta-

tion is a fullness of the Word of God. Thus Jesus resisted temptation. In response to each of Satan's assaults He quoted Scripture. His one answer to all the enemy's allurements was: "It is written." Like the Master let us then, first of all, be full of God's Word; let us have it in our hearts and in our memories, and then, when temptations come, let us use it. Let us both have the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and know, when in Spiritual danger, how to handle it. There is nothing Satan is so helpless before as God's Word. Keep it well in heart and hand then, oh Christian, and with it "resist the Devil and he will flee from you."

e. But, once more, another and last means, which I shall mention, by which we may avoid being overcome by temptation, is Prayer.

In other words, we must do just what Jesus here in our text enjoins; viz., lift up our hearts and voices for spiritual help to God. We must cry out to Him: "And lead us not into temptation," i. e., "Give us Thy

grace to resist temptation, to overcome it, and do not suffer us to be overcome by it. Allow us not to be tempted above that which we are able to bear, but with every temptation, provide Thou also a way of escape." "Watch and pray," says Christ to every disciple of His, "lest ye enter into temptation," i. e., enter into it voluntarily and are then overcome by it and fall into sin. And not only pray, He says, but watch also. Both watch and pray. By watching see your approaching danger and be on the defensive against it. By praying secure to yourself God's Help in the conflict and victory over the temptation.

Prayer, then, is the weapon of defense which Christ has forged and polished for us, and given to us, and with this glittering blade, grasped and held by the strong hand of Faith, we will always be able to put to flight all our foes, and to come off from every Spiritual conflict, more than conquerors. It is because we pray so little, that, being tempted, we fall so often. It is because we so seldom implore God's assistance, and

so seldom feel our weakness, and take to ourselves His omnipotent strength, that, like Peter, being tempted, we often deny the Lord that bought us; fall into divers temptations, and are often entangled in the snares of the Devil. It is thus we often wound the Saviour, reproach the church, and fill our own hearts with bitter grief; all because we do not pray to God, as Jesus enjoins, "And lead us not into temptation." Let us bear in mind then, Fellow Christians, that in order to overcome temptation, constant Divine Help is needed, and that this Divine Help can only be secured by constant and earnest Prayer. "Put on, therefore," as Paul exhorts, "the whole armor of God: the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication."

Thus arm yourselves, beloved, against temptation, and with these divine weapons wage bravely and unflinchingly the holy war-

fare in which you are engaged, and then also will yours be a glorious victory over all your spiritual foes, and a triumphant welcome, at last, into the approving presence of your Lord in His celestial and eternal glory.

THE PROFITABLENESS OF GODLINESS.

TEXT.

"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."—1 Timothy iv. 8.

Our text speaks of two lives: of the one as "the life that now is," the life which here on earth, previous to death, we are at present living; and of the other as "the life which is to come," the eternal or unending life which awaits each one of us, after death, and beyond the present life.

These two lives stand most closely related to each other. The one is, indeed, but the beginning of the other; and the second, or "the life to come," is only the projection, the unfolding, the fruitage of this life which now is. Accurately speaking, they are not, indeed, two lives, but only one life: one life lived on in two different worlds, and in two different environments and relationships, unbroken by death,

to the immortal, running on in one unbroken current of character and of essential being through all eternity. Hence, the Scriptures unchanged by the transition from the mortal declare, as they do, that "whatsoever a man soweth,"—soweth now, here in this life—"that also shall" that same man, as his own harvest, "reap" in "the life to come."

By the great mass of mankind, however, this truth of the essential oneness of these two lives, the one we now live and the one we will forever live hereafter, is not practically recognized as it should be. Men think of themselves and of their being and interests only within the narrow limits of this life that now is; and they largely neglect, while here in this life, to live as they ought, for that other life "which is to come": to so mould their character or true inner spiritual being as to be prepared for that other or future life, and to make it for themselves all that God wishes them to make it, namely, an eternal life of joy, an immortality of bliss and of glory.

This mistake of thus forgetting "the life to come," in our absorbed interest in the things

of "the life which now is," our text, this morning, seeks to correct. It exhibits, first of all, the close relationship, the unbroken oneness of these two lives; and then, as its great practical lesson, it tells us how we may make ourselves happy in them both. By being godly, is its declaration, you will be happy, both now and in eternity. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

This is, indeed, a valuable truth. It is the secret of a happy life, not only now, but forever. It is a secret, therefore, worth knowing by every human being. For how to be happy, both in time and in eternity; how to make the most of life, both now and forever, in all that is best for ourselves, for our fellowmen, for the welfare of society, and for the glory of God; how to attain, as the result of our living, these highest and most blessed ends of life—this is the one great question that confronts us all. Whether or not to live is not optional with us. Whether or not we will live eternally is not ours to choose. God has himself determined that for us. We do live; and we will live im-

mortally. The only choice left to us is to decide how we will live; what we will live for: by what principles and moral motives we will govern ourselves in our living: what course in our life here we will mark out for ourselves, and what destiny, as the outcome of our life here we will achieve for ourselves in the life hereafter: for let us ever remember that our destiny eternally hereafter is being now determined by each one for himself in the character which here he forms and in the life which here he lives.

The declaration of our text is that Godliness or Holiness of Character and Life is "profitable" to a man, to any man, both in this present life and in the eternal life to come.

It declares,

I. That now, already in this life, godliness is profitable.

This declaration of the profitableness of godliness or piety in this present life is capable of being tested by experience. To this test of experience let us submit. Doing so, what do we find? We find the declaration true in its

fullest sense. For, in what respect, or in regard to what human interest, or what relation pertaining to man, either as an individual or in any of his organic or social relations, is Piety or Godliness not an advantage? In what single respect that can be named is it not profitable to him to be a Christian?

1. Even as regards the lowest part of our being, the merely physical, the Human Body, "Godliness is profitable." It inculcates temperance, self-respect, industry, cleanliness, mastery of appetite, moderation of passion, self-government in speech and temper, calmness of mind. It has regard, in a word, for all those laws of physical being which are the sure sources and promoters of health. Hence, as a mere "sanitary regulation," as a rule by which "Boards of Health" might wisely, in large measure, be governed, Godliness, or the moral code of Piety, is profitable. Obedience to God's laws is always better for man physically than disobedience. For its mere physiological benefit it is better for him to observe, for example, the Divine Law concerning the Sabbath, or one day of rest in seven, than to violate it.

Physiologists are universally agreed that men need, for purely physiological reasons, one day's rest out of seven. There is plenty of evidence upon this question, all pointing in the same direction, and the conclusion is inevitable that man cannot violate the law of the Sabbath without physically losing by it. One day of rest out of seven is a necessity to his best physical being; and hence when he robs God of the day, he also robs himself of all the great mental and physical benefit which God, through the day, wished to confer upon him.

2. Equally profitable is Godliness or Piety to the intellect of man. All things else being equal, Godliness is conducive to the highest possible mental results and to the best possible intellectual efforts. The moral and Christian man will always, even in regard to things temporal, in regard, for example, to mechanical work, or to special professional studies, or to some intricate financial problem, think more clearly and more correctly than will an equally endowed man intellectually who is immoral or un-Christian, or than would or could that same man if he were not a moral and Christian man.

The good condition of body which he secures to himself by his piety will already largely help him to these higher and greater possibilities: for great is the help which comes to the mind from a healthy and clean and sound body. But, above all, God, in answer to prayer, also gives mental clearness and power to the good man and aids him to reach the mental results after which he seeks. Galileo, Columbus, Copernicus, Newton, Bacon, Kepler, Franklin, Morse, Field, and multitudes more, whose names are illustrious in the world of science and letters, were all men of prayer. Luther's famous aphorism is a true one: "To have prayed well is to have studied well." Or, as the Apostle James long ago put it: "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth unto all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him."

Undoubtedly this is true. The mind, as well as the body, suffers through indulgence in sin; and mind as well as body is kept healthy and is made strong, and is helped into its highest and best possible development by godliness, or by abstinence from indulgence in sin.

3. But godliness is profitable, also, to success in what may be called a business career.

In the long run, it always pays best, even in business, to be a good man. The reason is evident. Godliness, or piety, makes men sober, economical, prudent, generous, honest, just, industrious, kind, cheerful, obliging; all of which are essential elements to permanent and honorable business success; and the result of all this is the creation for themselves of a "reputation" which will secure for them the confidence and patronage of hosts of their fellowmen. To be a good man and to be known as such, is about as fine a business capital, therefore, as any one may want.

Some years ago a young man, not far away from here, clerking in a store, refused to make a fraudulent entry by which his employers would have made several hundred dollars. He was dismissed. Seeking another situation, and being asked to give references, he referred to his former employers. And, strange to say, they gave him the best possible recommendation, verbally adding that he was perhaps "a little too conscientious about trifles." That

young man is to-day a partner in one of the largest firms in Boston.

Yes! Piety pays in business. Honesty is not only the best ethics, but it is also really the best policy. "A good name," as a business capital, "is rather to be chosen than great riches." Even men who are themselves unscrupulous appreciate and want to deal with men who are scrupulous—men who have conscience and whom nothing can swerve from their integrity.

Young men had better, once for all, learn this lesson, that genuine integrity of character, purity of morals, right living, loyalty to conscience: in a word, godliness, or the filial fear of God, is a factor of success in business, or in any avocation of life carried on between man and man.

4. Especially, however, is godliness profitable in the spiritual results which it secures to him who possesses it.

How rich the gifts which it bestows upon him. It gives him quietness of conscience; sense of security under the fatherly protection and love of God; assurance of the pardon of

his sins; peace of soul, through faith in the blood of Christ; support by divine grace in times of sorrow; comfort from his trust in the Word of God; blessed joy in prayer and in the worship of God; hope of eternal life after this present life. All these are spiritual gifts enjoyed by him who is truly a child of God; who possesses, in his character and life, this spiritual characteristic designated here in our text by this one significant word—"godliness."

Reviewing, then, what we have now said: "Godliness," already in this life, or in what pertains to us now, in our present existence, is "profitable." It is gain to us, in every way, all through our journey of life on earth, to be "godly." As Solomon, three thousand years ago already, wrote, so may we now say: "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom," (that is, piety, godliness, the fear of the Lord), "and the man that getteth understanding; for the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all things that thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her

right hand, and in her left hand, riches of honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace."

Hence, even if this present life were our only life, if death ended all, if there were no "life to come," it would still be wisdom to be godly, it would still be gain to a man to be a Christian.

But this is not our only life. The life which now is does not terminate the duration of our being. After this, and beyond this, there is yet for us all "the life to come," the eternal life, the life which is the continuance, the fruitage, the unending harvest of this life, "which now is."

And godliness, says our text, is profitable also for that life. It declares that:

II. GODLINESS, FOR THAT LIFE WHICH IS TO COME, IS ESPECIALLY PROFITABLE.

"Profitable," it says, "not only for the life that now is, but also, or especially, for that which is to come."

But, in what respects is godliness profitable for "the life to come"? In every way.

As all Christian experience proves, it is profitable when we once come to enter into that life which is to come. The entrance into the future life is by that mysterious experience which we call death. Dying, in other words, only expresses the silent and invisible flight of the human spirit out of this life that now is, into that other life—the life which is to come. We know but little really about this experience called dying. It must, however, be a very solemn experience. It is going from the tried to the untried; from the known to the unknown; from the seen to the unseen. It is not strange, therefore, that men, almost universally, fear to die.

But "godliness" is "profitable" in death. Why? Why because "the sting of death is sin." But to a godly man that sting of death has been removed. His sins are all canceled. The record against him is clear. His guilt is all washed away in the blood which was shed for him on Calvary, and in which he has trusted, and does then trust, for salvation. Christ is his righteousness. In Christ, or through the imputed holiness of Christ, he then stands just-

ified before God, as though he were himself without sin, or entirely holy. And hence, being thus fully at peace with God, through Christ; and being thus, because of Christ's work for him and the Holy Spirit's work within him, prepared to meet God, he dies in peace. He does not fear to enter into "the life to come." Untried and unknown as its experiences to him are, he yet knows that death to him is "gain"; that it will introduce him into a life of ineffable and eternal bliss, compared with which the highest and purest joys of this present or earthly life are not worthy to be named.

Thus sustained, the Christian or godly man goes up in death, without a fear, cheered with a sure hope of a blessed immortality, to meet his God. His "godliness" is then "profitable" to him. His faith, as a Christian, then supports him. Going out of the life that now is, he enters joyously into that which is to come. Pausing, for a moment, in that dying hour, upon the boundary line, the narrow isthmus between time and eternity, he first, we may imagine, casts one glance back over the past,

and then, looking forward to his new and better and eternal future home, he passes triumphantly over, exclaiming as he soars away:

"The world recedes! It disappears!
Heaven opens on my eyes! My ears
With sounds seraphic ring!
Lend, lend your wings! I mount! I fly!
Oh Grave, where is thy victory?
Oh Death, where is thy sting?"

Thus dies the Christian! Thus only dies the Christian. No one but he can thus die. Godliness alone enables man thus to die in peace and in triumph. The lamp of the wicked, in a dying hour, goes out in darkness. The hope of the hypocrite then perishes. The world's sources of comfort then all fail. But the foundations of God then stand sure. The rock upon which the Christian has built his hopes abides immovable. His light goes not out. He knows "whom he has believed, and is persuaded that he is able to keep that which he has committed to him against that day."

"Let reason vainly boast her power
To teach her children how to die;

The sinner, in a dying hour,
Needs more than wisdom can supply.
A view of Christ, the sinner's friend,
Alone can cheer him in the end."

But "godliness," or piety, avails also beyond death, or in the life eternal which follows death. "Godliness," says our text, "is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

Promise of "the life to come," in what sense? Not, I answer, as regards the fact of a life to come. For there is a life to come to all men, whether godly or ungodly. Death is annihilation neither to the righteous nor to the unrighteous. Immortality is unconditioned by moral character. "Marvel not at this," says Christ, "for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." Concerning the wicked, in the Day of Judgment, He says: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

But the meaning is: that to the "godly," or "pious," there is the divine promise of a happy eternal life to come; that their immortality shall be to them a life of unending felicity; a blessing, and not a curse; a fellowship forever with God in bliss, and not, as to the wicked, a banishment forever from His presence in suffering and death.

And the godly shall thus be eternally in such blessed fellowship with God, because they are in moral character fitted thus to be with Him. Their "godliness" is their moral qualification for God. Only holy souls can dwell with the holy God. Only such would God allow to dwell with Him, or enjoy having with Him. "Blessed are the pure in heart," the holy in character, "for they shall see God." They alone can see Him; that is, see Him and enjoy seeing Him; see Him and live blissfully in the moral glory and ineffable holiness of His majestic and august presence.

Let us not forget this truth. Godliness is essentially necessary in order to enjoy God, either now or in eternity. To be happy with God, there must always first be right moral and

spiritual relations toward God. The character of man must first be in moral harmony with God. Happiness and holiness are eternal correlatives. Even God could not be happy if He were not holy. He is infinitely happy because He is infinitely holy. So man, to be happy, must be holy. To be with God, and to enjoy God, and to share the happiness of God, he must first of all be like God. "Godliness," Godlikeness, God-fulness, God-oneness, this, in the very nature of the case, is, therefore, the absolutely necessary moral requirement in order to attain to a blissful immortality with God "in the life to come."

But, whilst the godly only can thus see and enjoy God, all who are godly will see and enjoy Him. They do so now already. The good now see and enjoy God; in His works, in His word, in His providence, in blessed spiritual communion with Him; see and enjoy God where the wicked have no conception whatever of His presence. And they will do so eternally: for it is divinely promised to them. Thus the "Godliness" of the good man qualifies him for an eternal vision of God; and the

word of God, because he is godly, guarantees it to him.

But Godliness, I yet add, is the measure also to each one of us, of the "life to come." I mean by that: that the degree of our bliss in the "life to come" will be determined by the degree of our personal "holiness," or "godliness" to which in "the life which now is," we attain, and with which at death we enter from this life into that "life which is to come." "Holiness" is the soul's moral capacity for the enjoyment of God, and of all that constitutes the high bliss of "the life to come." The measure, therefore, of our personal holiness will, to each one of us, be also the measure in heaven, through all eternity, of our personal happiness.

Hence God says to all who hope for an eternal life with Him, "Be ye holy, for I am holy": that is, "Be holy, for without holiness, because of my holiness, you can neither be admitted into my presence nor enjoy my presence; and be eminently holy, for the degree of your holiness will be the measure of your soul's capacity, when once in My presence, of being happy; of knowing and loving and en-

joying Me, and of coming eternally into closer and holier oneness with Me."

Since piety is thus beneficial to us in all our relations both to God and man, since it thus promotes our highest welfare now and forever, since it thus gives us all we need for both body and soul, for both time and eternity, piety, surely, is also the one thing which, above all others, we should seek after and cultivate. The fear of the Lord being thus the beginning of wisdom, this also should be the one supreme attainment to which we should all aspire, and for which, above all things else, we should supremely live.

Make this, then, my hearers, the one high ambition of your lives. Cultivate Godliness, as the one best boon of your period. Be godly, come through faith in Christ into right moral relations with God; be in moral harmony with God, be in character like God, live in obedience to God, seek in all things to please God, give up your whole being to the service of God, consecrate all your life in holy ambition to glorify God, be filled with the Spirit of God, come willingly and fully under the sway of

the renewing and sanctifying grace of God; in a word, seek after "Godliness." For he who has "Godliness" has God, and he who has God can want no more, but, in God, has all; all life, all light, all holiness, all power, all peace, all satisfaction, all joy; a living spring of blessedness in his soul, a fountain of purest spiritual life, a heaven, whether he be here on earth or yonder in the skies; and is able ever to say: "I have set the Lord always before me; He is the portion of mine inheritance; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved; therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore."

THE DIVINE LAW OF SELF-SURRENDER.

TEXT.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you: Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."—John xii. 24.

The Saviour, in these words, expresses a great principle or law of His spiritual kingdom, namely, that by self-surrender and self-sacrifice, and even by self-dying, will come blessing and life, both to ourselves and to others.

This principle, that by death comes life, is seen already in the natural world. The grain of seed must not only be cast into the ground, but it must also there die, must surrender itself even to death, must actually lay down as a sacrifice its life, before there can be germination, growth, blade, stalk, harvest. But, in or by such self-surrender and death it gains

all these. Out of its decay and death there comes a new and higher life in the growing plant. The single grain that dies multiplies itself into a hundred new and fresher grains. By dying it lives more than it lived while living. It gains by losing.

But this principle, thus true as a law, in the natural world, is equally true in the spiritual world. It governs in regard to all moral and spiritual life as truly as with regard to all merely material or irrational life.

Our Saviour here declares that even He Himself is so under this law that He can become a true divine source of salvation and life to others only by first dying, or by first surrendering His life. This, indeed, is the very meaning of the text as He here uses it. Its primary reference is directly to Himself. It is a prophecy primarily of His death, but it is also a promise of life to our dead world from His death. By His death was to come our life. From His cross and passion was to spring up a great harvest of benefit to all mankind. His dying, like a grain of seed-corn, was to be the origin, or the source, of infinite

blessing and mercy to millions of immortal souls. The world was to have life, but could have it only by His death.

And what was thus true in this respect of Christ, is equally true, also, as a law, or determining principle, with regard to every disciple of Christ; and holds true, indeed, with regard to every human being. It is a divine law that men always gain by being willing first to lose. We always acquire more only by first surrendering what we have. We receive the good by first parting with the bad; we receive the better by first parting with the good. We live by first dying. It is God's law. The grain of corn must first yield up its life before it can multiply itself into new life in other and fresher grains.

This law of self-surrender, thus taught in our text, has a two-fold application to the Christian life, to a consideration of which I wish, today, to invite your attention. It applies:

I. To entrance into a true Christian life, and,

II. To continuance in the Christian life.

I remark therefore:

I. THAT THIS LAW OF SELF-SURRENDER IS THE DIVINE CONDITION OF ENTRANCE INTO A TRUE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

It is only by a willing surrender of that which we by nature have, and love, and are, that we can at all become Christians. As our text teaches, there must first be the experience in us of death before there can be life; death to our natural self-will, and selfishness, and sin; death to our supreme love to the world and the things of time and sense; death to all our sinful affections, and associations, and desires, and pleasures, and ambitions, and habits. "Old things," in the soul, and in the life, must first by voluntary relinquishment, as the Scriptures express it, "pass away" before all things in us and to us can become "new." There must be renunciation first of "the world, the flesh, and the devil," before there can even be the first step of true entrance upon the new life in Christ and in holiness. Over the portal of admission into the Kingdom the Saviour has written: "If any man will come after me,

let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

Thus is the very beginning of the Christian life a surrender, a parting with what was before possessed and loved, the actual dying of what formerly was the soul's very life. "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life shall keep it unto life eternal."

The meaning of this is that if any man so loves his merely natural life, and especially his sinful life, that he is not willing to give it up and separate himself from it, he will, in death, lose all for which he here thus lived; while if, on the other hand, he now comes, by God's grace, to see the sinfulness of his natural life, and renounces it, he shall then "keep his life unto life eternal;" that is, he shall then have a new and higher life in holiness and Christ, which he will never part with, but which will be his blissful possession forever. In a word, the Saviour means in what He thus says, that if a man in any respect, so loves the life that now is; the merely material, the social, the temporal, the sensuous, the earthly, and is so absorbed in these that he cannot and will

not, for the sake of Christ and for the sake of his soul, give them up, as objects of supreme affection and desire, he will, in consequence, find, at length, that he has not only lost them, but has also lost himself, his soul, his own very being, his eternal life; whilst, on the contrary, if, for Christ's sake, and for his soul's sake, he is ready to part with the sinful things of this world, ready to cast them from him as the farmer casts away the grain of seed which he sows, and if he is willing to give up himself, and all he has and is, as a glad surrender to Christ, then also will he, in the highest sense, keep himself, and then only will he truly keep himself. Then only will he really begin to live. His new and eternal life comes to him by his surrender of his present sinful self to death; he saves by losing; he gives up much, but he gets back more and better; he dies, but he rises, at once, in dying, up to a new and infinitely higher and holier and eternal life. The new birth in Christ is always out of the soul's voluntary death to the old life of sin. To get back home to his father's house, the prodigal, first of all, must rise up and leave

the "far country" where before he had dwelled. And this is what conversion is. Conversion is simply turning; turning first from and then turning to; from sin and self, to Christ and to holiness. To gain God's favor we must renounce the world's pleasure. To reach heaven we must part with earth. To gain, we must lose. To live, we must die. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

And hence Bunyan, in his matchless allegory, correctly, represents Christian, his pilgrim, as, first of all, in order to win the heavenly city, turning his back on his own native earthly city; and he represents him as turning away even from his own family, and from his own best friends, because they would not go with him to the better life; and he represents him as closing his ears to all their appeals to him to return, crying, "Life! Life! Eternal life!" To gain that life, he gives up this. To win heaven, he loses earth. And that is what every one who wishes to be saved must do; for only by doing so can any one ever gain that better and eternal life.

This principle, which our Saviour here in our text declares, applies also, I now remark:

II. To the whole continuance of the Christian life, as well as to its beginning.

It holds true in our Christian life in two respects, namely, both as regards our usefulness and our happiness.

a. In the matter, first, of doing good, or of Christian usefulness, this law governs absolutely.

In order to bless others, we must always ourselves first be losers. We must unselfishly first give up what we have, and use what we have, before we can successfully do anything for the good of others. Look, for example, at the mother. She is a fountain of daily benediction to her children. But how does she become so? Only by complete self-surrender; only by unselfish sacrifice of her own comfort, ease, time, strength, life itself. Only thus, only at such cost, can she give them what she does. Look at the teacher! To awaken the dormant intellect of the pupil, to stir his slum-

bering genius, and to bless him with the high boon of education, how he must tax his thought, his interest, his patience, his scholarship, his best skill and power; and how he must pour out in sacrifice his very being into the pupil. Look at the orator! To instruct, to convince, to persuade his audience, to gain with them the point at which he aims, how it costs him the expenditure of all his best possessions; his nerve, his knowledge, his culture, his power of every kind, and how, to effect his end, he must spend his very being and lay his very life upon the altar. Or, look at the patriot! Our patriotic soldiers, who now sleep in honored graves, sleep thus because they unselfishly laid down their lives in defense of their country. They might selfishly have saved their lives. They might have refused to enlist and march and suffer and die. But then their country could not have lived. Then the Union could not have been preserved. Then our nation, as one unbroken whole, could not have survived. The life, the blood, the death of unselfish heroes was the high price which must needs first be paid. But they

nobly paid that price. They grandly made that heroic self-sacrifice. And thus, namely, by themselves dying, they saved their country from dying; and now, although dead, they yet live in the grateful memory of their country, in the principles that triumphed, and in the cause which they vindicated.

And so general and absolute is this law that we may safely say that there is not a single blessing or element in all that today makes up our civilization, our liberty, our comforts, our luxuries, our education, our homes, our religion, which is not the legacy of cost, the purchase of sacrifice and of unselfishness, by those who have gone before us; the boon to us of pain and struggle, and labor, and skill, and heroism, and blood, and death of others gone before us. It is God's irreversible law.

And thus also, I now remark, is it especially in all distinctively Christian usefulness. The condition of being a spiritual blessing to others, is this same grand principle of unselfish self-surrender. It is the law of Christ, and the law of His Kingdom for all time, that we cannot save others without first sacrificing ourselves.

There must first be death; death to our selfishness, to our love of ease, to all seeking of our own comfort, to all consideration of our own interests, and there must be in us, as there was in Christ, a willingness, if need be, to sacrifice even our life itself in order to save others, before we can become, in a large measure, the saviours of our fellow men. Their life, their spiritual, their eternal life, can only come, as it were, through our death. Only by our spiritual travail can they receive spiritual birth. "The blood of the martyrs has always been the seed of the church." Huss, and Ridley, and Latimer, and all "the noble army of martyrs," laid down their lives for Christ and for the truth; but out from their ashes there has flamed a great pillar of Gospel light which has scattered the surrounding moral darkness, and which has showed thousands, and even millions, of other human beings, both how to live for Christ, and, if needs be, how, also, bravely to die for Christ.

And thus it always is. The measure of our willingness to deny ourselves in order to do good, is the measure, also, of the good that

we actually will do. If we do for Christ and for our fellowmen only which costs us nothing, we will do but little good, and that little will scarcely be worth the doing. Cost, sacrifice, self-denial, toil, generosity, self-forgetfulness, the laying down, every day, in whole or in part, of even life itself—this is ever the divine condition of usefulness, the price we must ever pay in order to be benefactors to our fellowmen or helpers to advance the Kingdom of Christ in the world. There must be sacrifice before there can be salvation; death before there can be life. That was a very beautiful illustration of this law recently given by Mr. Moody in one of his sermons. One of his little Sunday-school scholars, being very sick, sent for him, and asked him, if she died, to preach her funeral sermon. And she gave this reason for her request: "I have been trying so long to bring father to church and he would never come. But now, I have been thinking, if I die, father will not refuse to go to my funeral, and then you can tell him all about Jesus; and, Mr. Moody, I would be willing to die six times over to get him to hear you tell

about Jesus." She died, as she expected, but Mr. Moody himself was sick at the time of her death and could not attend her funeral. But a few weeks after her death a rough-looking man called on him, and holding out his hand, said: "You don't know me?" "No, I don't." "Well, I," he said, "am the father of little Mary, the father she died for. I heard how she said she would die six times over for me if only I could hear the gospel once. It nearly breaks my heart. Oh, I do want to be a Christian, so that I can meet the dear child again in heaven." Soon after he united with the church, and has, ever since, now four or five years, been a faithful and consistent Christian; led to Christ by the mighty love for him of his child; a love so great, so self-sacrificing, so thoroughly Christ-like, that she was glad, in order to save him, to die for him. Such interest and such love for others we all need; and only in the measure in which we have it will we be useful. Only as we thus love souls into the Kingdom of Christ will we win them in at all.

And here is the secret, also, of post-mortem

usefulness, or of doing good after we are dead, even down to the end of time. Of Abel it is written: "He being dead, yet speaketh." So it may be said of all of us when once we have passed away from earth. But in order that we may thus live on when once we are dead, we must now, while we live, put ourselves, at cost to ourselves, into something that will live after we are gone. Doing so, we can all give ourselves a blessed double immortality—an immortality with Christ in heaven, and an immortality for Christ and for the church, for the good of our fellowmen and for the glory of God down to the end of time, here upon earth. Thus the godly mother may live on after she is dead in the godly life and character of her children; the pious author in his pure and helpful writings; the faithful teacher in his influence and impress upon his scholars; the Christian pastor in his earnest teachings of God's word to his people; the unselfish philanthropist by the liberal gift of his means. Thus we all may be immortally useful.

But this divine law of self-surrender holds true, also,

b. In our Christian life as a condition of our own personal happiness.

To live to do good is ever the secret of a truly happy life. Unselfishness is the secret of a happy life. Self-denial is God's highway to joy. We make ourselves most happy when we most forget ourselves, and most live to make others happy. He that selfishly lives only to make himself happy, never is happy; he, on the other hand, who unselfishly forgets himself and lives to do good and make others happy, in this very act makes himself happy. For happiness is a shy goddess, ever gliding farther and farther away from those who directly, and only for their own selfish enjoyment of her, seek her. But happiness has a twin sister, whose name is usefulness, and who is always near to each one of us, and whom we all may daily find, and, finding whom, we also find happiness. Finding usefulness we also find and have happiness.

Christ, our Divine Lord, even in sight of His cross, was filled with joy. He was glad, we read, even in the agony of Gethsemane and the bitterness of Calvary, because He saw that

by His death He could give life to our lost world. "Looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame."

And so, also, may we, by Christ-like self-denial and self-sacrifice, both for the bodies and for the souls of our fellowmen, bring into our own souls a very floodtide of holy joy. "The quality of mercy is not strained. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed. It blesseth him that gives and him that takes."

But, blessed and joyous as is thus a life of Christian self-denial and sacrifice, for the glory of God and for the good of our fellowmen, now already, our highest reward and richest return for it all will, of course, be in the life to come. The Saviour, out of love for whom we now do thus labor, and deny and sacrifice ourselves, sees and knows and notes it all; and He then will, also, as He has promised, reward it all. He regards all we thus do for His church or for our needy fellowmen, as evidence of our love for Him, and as having

been done directly and personally for Himself. Hence, even the giving of a cup of cold water to a thirsty one, in the name of a disciple, shall, He assures us, have, from Him, its eternal reward.

RELIGIOUS DUTY BETTER THAN RELIGIOUS ENJOYMENT.

TEXT.

"Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles: one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias."—Matthew xvii. 4.

All things considered, it is no wonder that Peter declared it to be "good" to be there on the Mount of Transfiguration. With the mountain all ablaze, as it was with divine glory; with the Saviour's form radiant above the brightness of the sun; with the presence and conversation of Moses and Elijah, who had just descended from the celestial world; with a bright cloud of light overshadowing and enveloping them with its unearthly lustre; with the voice of God speaking out of the cloud and saying to them: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him"; with all this, and with yet much more filling his cup of religious enjoyment to overflowing, it is, I

say, no wonder that Peter felt glad to be there, and that he desired there also forever to remain. Speaking as he felt, it is not strange that he exclaimed, as he did: "Lord, it is good for us to be here; good to be here and good, also, to stay here. Here, in the bliss of this holy mount, let us abide. If thou wilt, let us here make three tabernacles, one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias."

And Peter was right, as he appreciated the situation, in what he thus said. It was good to be there, so far as Peter himself was concerned, and so far as mere present religious enjoyment was concerned.

And yet his proposal was sadly defective and wrong, viewed in a broader and better light. In wishing as he did to stay there, in selfishly forgetting the sinful and suffering world down at the foot of the mount, in making more of mere religious enjoyment than of the higher claims of religious duty, in thinking more of himself, and of the immediate present, than of his obligations to others and in forgetting that he himself was under discipline for an eternal and heavenly life, of which all that

transfiguration glory was only the faintest symbol or foreshadowing, in all these respects his proposal was greatly defective. Good to be there? Yes! But not best to remain there. Why not? Simply because God had better things in store for Peter than that joy of the Mount of Transfiguration, ecstatic as that was. He purposed bringing him to Mount Zion on high, to an infinitely greater glory, to the unveiled radiance of Christ, his Master, in His celestial and eternal kingdom, to the presence and companionship, not of Moses and Elijah only, but of all the countless multitudes of the redeemed, and of all the innumerable hosts of angels around the throne of God in His eternal presence. But Peter was far from being yet prepared for this glorious heavenly life. He needed a discipline which no mere joyous experiences on the Mount of Transfiguration could give him; which no mere sitting there and quietly beholding the revealed glory of Christ, delightful as that was, could work within him, but which only stern and unflinching and brave fidelity to Duty, which only the rough and painful experiences of contact and

conflict with a wicked world, which only the sharp and lacerating discipline of labor and suffering and even of martyrdom itself, for Christ, could and finally would bestow upon him. The way for Peter, as also for each one of us, and for all Christ's disciples, and even for our Divine Master Himself by which to attain to heaven and to eternal life, leads not up from the bliss and glory of the Mount of Transfiguration, but is always trodden with bleeding feet, slowly, through the darkness of the garden of Gethsemane, and around the brow of Calvary.

Hence, though, as a matter of enjoyment, it was "good" for Peter to be there with Christ on the Mount, it still would not, as he requested, have been good for him to have remained there. Religious duty, patient labor, quiet suffering, holy living, victorious dying, down at the foot of the Mount, and out amid the noise and dust and conflict of the busy world, trying to win it to Christ and seeking to save it by the power of the Gospel—that, for Christ, for Peter, and for the world would be infinitely better. Jesus wanted no Taber-

nacles built, as quiet places of mere enjoyment, neither for Himself nor for any of His disciples, there in the Mount of Transfiguration. With Him Religious Duty, then and always, was before mere religious enjoyment; and He then and always regarded Religious Enjoyment as valuable only in so far as it was helpful in any way to the better discharge of Religious Duty.

This lesson Jesus still teaches His disciples. He takes us, at times, up into Blessed Spiritual Mounts, not, however, to stay in the glory of them; not for the mere sake of the enjoyment itself, as an end, which we may there experience, but in order that we may in these Mounts gather strength and encouragement for the Christian duties which lie in our pathway of life, and which meet us down at the foot of these Transfiguration Elevations.

Two Questions may profitably, in our consideration of this text, engage our thoughts, namely:

I. Why was it good, as Peter declared, to be there on the Mount of Transfiguration with Christ? And,

II. Why would it not have been good, as he wanted, to have remained there with Christ?

Let us consider each of these questions in the order stated. First, then, we ask:

I. WHY, AS PETER DECLARED, WAS IT GOOD FOR HIM AND JAMES AND JOHN TO BE THERE WITH JESUS ON THE MOUNT.

One reason manifestly lies in the very fact that Jesus Himself had taken them there.

"And after six days, Jesus," we read, "taketh Peter, and James, and John, his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them." They were, therefore, at that time, just where Jesus wanted them to be. It is always good to be where Jesus wants us to be; where He takes us, or where He bids us go, or where He goes with us, and where we can know and feel that He is with us. He does not always want us in the same place, even though it be in itself the holiest or best place. Just then He wanted Peter, James and John in the Mount. The very next day, however, He wanted them down with Him in the World. So with us. Our place

today is in the Prayer-meeting, or at the Communion Table; tomorrow it is in our shop or store, or nursery. Jesus calls us to all these, and is with us in all these. There is a proper time for worship, and another proper time for work; a time for enjoyment, and a time for energy; a time for devotion, and a time for duty; a time for the gathering of spiritual strength, and a time for the expenditure of that strength; a time to sing, and a time to suffer; a time to be on the Mount, and a time to be down amid the dust and toil and sweat of service for Christ and for humanity. And wherever Jesus calls us to go or be, there, at that time, we ought also to go or be, and there it will then also be good for us to be. And there we can then say: "Lord, it is good to be here."

That Mount Hermon, where the Transfiguration took place, was, in itself, no very desirable place to be. It was difficult to ascend, was rough, bleak, cold, inhospitable. But, led there by the Saviour, and accompanied thither by His presence, it instantly became to these disciples a Mount of Glory, a very Gateway

of Heaven. So pathways of Duty, and Crosses of Sorrow, and days of Trial, Sick Beds, Bereavements, Sufferings, Poverty, Experiences of any kind, if accompanied by Christ's presence and grace, become to us also, such Blessed Mounts, and lead us also to say, as Peter here said: "Lord, it is good to be here." This has often been the joyous experience of the disciples of Christ.

Go, then, my hearer, wherever duty, at the time, bids you go. But go nowhere, and be nowhere where Christ is not, and where you cannot take Christ with you. When Christ bids you, or invites you, go up with Him into the Mount; and when He bids you, go down again into the busy secular life. The one place, with Christ, is as sacred as the other. The one duty is worship much as the other. We glorify Christ, by holy honest living, through the week, as much as we glorify Him by singing, and praying, and preaching, on Sunday. The home, the shop, the mill, the office, the market, the store, the street with Christ and in the line of duty and living there for the glory of God, is holy ground, and as

near heaven as the consecrated sanctuary, or the house of God. To us, as to St. John, even dreary islands, like Patmos, if we are in communion with Christ, become gateways of heaven.

"While blessed with a sense of His love,
A palace a toy would appear;
And prisons would palaces prove
If Jesus would dwell with me there."

But it was thus "good" to be there upon that Mount of Transfiguration also, because there Jesus wondrously revealed Himself to His disciples.

There "His face," we read, "did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." There they "beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." There the splendor of His Deity shone out through the Veil of His Humanity, and there He stood revealed before them as they never had beheld Him before. And it was "good" for them thus to see Him there, in the radiance and glory of His Divinity. For thus seeing Him, it gave a new and clearer

view of His real and true being. It confirmed their faith in Him, and it fitted them to go down from that Mount, and with new courage and strength and zeal to follow Him and to confess Him everywhere.

And, for this same reason, it is good also for us often to go up into the Mount of our Spiritual Privileges; the Mount of God's Word and Sacraments, the Mount of the Sanctuary. It is good for us to ascend the Mount of Prayer, the Mount of Communion with Christ, because thus we come into holier and closer nearness to Christ. In all these, Christ is revealed more and more clearly before us; stands out, as it were, "transfigured" before us, and we catch new and more precious views of Him as our Divine Saviour, and because of these new and more precious views of him, our faith in Him is strengthened, our love deepened, our zeal for His glory anew enkindled, and we come down from these "Mounts of Communion" and Revelation animated anew to confess Him before men, and to live and labor, and, if need be, even die for Him. Yes! It is "good" to go to our Bibles, to our Churches, to our Lord's

Tables, to our Closets of Prayer, because there we see Jesus as we see Him nowhere else. On the Mount and not down in the low plains of earth, is His Temple and Means of Grace, and not in the world of Sin He reveals Himself to us.

Use faithfully, then, my hearers, God's appointed Means of Grace. To see the moral and spiritual glory of your Lord Jesus Christ, go to His House, seek for Him in His Word, feed upon Him in His Holy Supper, lift up your Spirit to Him in prayer. Thus look for Him, and you will see Him. Thus seek Him, and you will find Him. Thus desire to behold Him, and He will reveal Himself also gloriously to you.

It was "good," however, also for the disciples to be there in the Mount of Transfiguration with Christ because of the holy joy which, because of His glory, they there experienced.

The revelation of the glory of Christ, which he there beheld, filled Peter's heart with unutterable gladness. His cup of bliss was there full. There was, in that glad hour, a very foretaste of heaven in his soul. His happiness

was perfect, and he was willing, if Christ so willed, to build tabernacles, and abide there forever.

But, thus does Jesus now often, when His disciples are in the Mount of Communion with Him, gladden their hearts and fill them with joy. How often, for example, in the sanctuary, is not the Christian's soul thus filled with joy, so that he says: "Lord, it is good to be here." Especially at the Lord's table. What a joyous Mount of Transfiguration there often is to the disciple of Christ! How the moral radiance of His glorified Redeemer there shines out upon him, and fills and thrills his soul with the very ecstacy of heaven, and, in the fulness of his joy, he cries out: "Lord, it is good to be here." And so, also, at times, in our closets of prayer! How full the cup of joy which is there sometimes poured out by the Transfigured Saviour's hand, into our souls! How "good" to be there!

The world thinks a religious life a gloomy and a joyless life. They think we Christians have no happiness. Poor souls! It is Religion alone that gives real joy. It is we Christians

alone who are really happy. We are not always, of course, on the Mount. It would not be well for us if we always were. But still, we sometimes are, and some of us often are. We have, at times, as Christians, special experiences of our Saviour's nearness and comfort and of our rich blessedness and heirship in Him; and we have always peace of soul and quietness of conscience, and hope of eternal life through Him. All this the world does not have, and without Christ, cannot have. Hence it is ever restless and unsatisfied, and is ever asking: "Who will show us any good?" Without Christ, and reconciliation to God, and quietness of Conscience, it can never, with Peter, say: "Lord, it is good to be here; here we have all we want; here let us build tabernacles." That satisfaction and peace and rest, the soul alone possesses that seeks and finds its happiness in Christ.

But, while it was thus "good" for Peter to be in the Mount awhile with Christ, I now remark:

II. That it would not have been good for him, as he desired, to have been allowed to remain there.

The proposal to build three tabernacles there, and then stay there, and give themselves up to the mere soft luxury of enjoyment—that proposal was, in every way, a very short-sighted and ignorant and selfish proposal. It was born, indeed, of pure selfishness. All who were there upon the Mount, Peter himself included, the world down below the Mount, we, all men, would all have been losers had his proposal been granted. Think for a moment how much would have been lost. Moses and Elijah would have been kept away from heaven. Jesus would have been detained from His great life work of human redemption. The world would have been deprived of an atonement for its sins. Peter would have lost all the grand career of usefulness which he afterward wrought, and would thus have missed the bright crown of Eternal Salvation which he now wears as the reward of all his labors and sufferings for Christ. The truth is, Peter,

in thus desiring to stay there upon the Mount, made several very great mistakes; mistakes, alas! which we, too, are constantly prone to make.

His first mistake was in making Religion consist so much in mere religious enjoyment. To be there in the Mount; to behold the glory of Jesus; to be feeling "good;" to be listening to the conversation of Moses and Elijah; to be having, in a word, "a happy time of it"; that seemed to Peter to be the perfection of piety, the highest and most desirable attainment possible in Christian life.

There are many such Christians now. They estimate the measure of their piety altogether by the tone and character of their feelings. They value a religious service by the amount of good feeling that it creates. "Feeling," "enjoyment," is with them everything.

But this is surely a great mistake. Piety does not consist in mere experiences occasionally of religious ecstacies. It consists in religious knowledge, in Christian fidelity, in the culture of a Christian conscience, in unselfish Christian activity, in holiness, in consistency

of daily life, in increasing likeness to Christ, in solid Christian character. This is genuine Christian piety. And happiness is only an incidental fruit of all this Christian living and character. Only because Peter was a real and true and advanced disciple of Christ, did Christ take him up into the Mount at all, and his happiness there was granted him only as an encouragement to him in his subsequent Christian service and suffering when he should again go down from the Mount.

Beware, Christian friends, of substituting good feeling for goodness, or mere occasional pious emotions for piety, or mere excited and aroused religious sensibilities for religion. You are a "Christian," not in proportion to how "happy" you may occasionally get in a religious meeting, but in proportion to your likeness in spirit and life to Christ, and in proportion to how squarely and fairly you act and speak and live when you are not in a religious meeting, and when you are not especially happy, and when you are down again from the Mount, and out amid the dust and tussle and struggle of every day life. Then is the

time to measure our piety, and know about how much real "grace" we have; or rather, how little we have, even the best of us.

But a second mistake which Peter made was in entirely forgetting and ignoring the claims upon him, as a disciple of Christ, of the wretched and perishing World, down at the foot of that Mount of Transfiguration.

He, Peter, was all right; he was near Christ up in the Mount, happy, seeing and hearing blessed things, enjoying the company of visitors from heaven, and himself on the way to heaven, and little now did he think or care for all the vast multitudes of sick and sorrowing and suffering and sinful and perishing, that were not up there where he was. Little did he think of going down and carrying to them the blessed message of all that he had there seen and heard and felt of Christ, and try to bring them, also, to Him. No! He thought in that glad hour only of himself. He wanted to stay there. And Jesus had first, as it were, to put out the Light and Glory of that Transfiguration Scene, and, as it were, push him down from the Holy Mount before he was will-

ing to relinquish his enjoyment, and leave the bliss that he was there selfishly drinking in, and come down again to live and labor and even die to lead others to Christ.

And that, also, is the very mistake which from the early days of Christianity, Christian men and women, for the sake of holy devotion and enjoyment, have made, who as anchorites, and hermits, and monks, and nuns, have shut themselves up in caves and cells and monasteries, to be there alone with God. Some of the saintliest of Christ's disciples, sick of sin, and longing for closer communion with God, have done so. But it was a mistake. The world needed them, and was left worse and morally more helpless without them, and their duty was to have remained, as moral lights and teachers and workers for Christ in it. And they also needed the discipline which contact thus with the wicked world would have given them. Their piety would have grown infinitely more robust and healthful and vigorous by remaining in the world, and battling against sin, and relieving sorrow and

seeking to save the world, than selfishly fleeing from it all. It was a mistake.

But that is a mistake which we all, as Christians, are apt to make. We are prone to make our religion terminate too much with ourselves. If only we ourselves are Christians, if we think it is all right with our own dear selves; if only we are on the Mount with Christ, and on the way to heaven, then we rest there, and we concern ourselves, alas! but little about the suffering and perishing world around us.

All this, however, is certainly wrong. It is intensely selfish. Our duty is to seek to save others as well as ourselves. Our duty is not selfish enjoyment, but unselfish, earnest Christian activity. As long as the world is so full of sin and of sorrow and of suffering, and has such need of Christ and of salvation, our place is not on the Mount of Ease or Enjoyment, but it is down and out in this lost world, seeking by every means in our power to bring it also to the Christ Whom we have found and in Whom we rejoice.

A third mistake which Peter, in desiring to remain upon the Mount, made, was: In sup-

posing that enjoyment, or exemption from suffering, was better than suffering.

Jesus had foretold the sufferings which He, as Redeemer, was soon about to endure. And He had, also, foretold to Peter the sufferings which he, as His disciple, would endure. But if he thought at all, Peter thought that to stay there on the Mount, and escape all these predicted sufferings, would be much better than to go down from it and meet and endure them all. Better for Christ, he perhaps thought, to stay here than to go down, and be "rejected of the Jews, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed." And better, also, for myself, he perhaps thought, to stay here than to go through all that is before me as an apostle of Christ. But would it have been better? No! It would not have been better. It was better for Christ Himself, better also for Peter, and infinitely better, surely, for us and for the world, that that Transfiguration Scene did not continue; that Christ and His chosen three did not stay there upon the Mount. That enjoyment of the Mount, and that exemption from suffering

which would then have been escaped would, no doubt, have been vastly pleasanter, but it would certainly not have been better. Better in the end for them all possible suffering than even an endless enjoyment such as they were then possessing.

And so with us. We shrink, I know, from trials and from sorrows and from sufferings. We deem them often only an evil. We prefer present and constant enjoyment. We would, if we could, like Peter, always stay upon the Mount. But, even for ourselves, this would not be "good." Enjoyment is not the highest good. Moral discipline is our highest good. Culture of character, holiness, likeness to Christ, spiritual readiness for heaven; these are the best attainments. And yet all these come to us, not in the sunny Vale of Prosperity, not in the Mount of Enjoyment, but down in the valley of sorrow, by the experience of affliction, and of heartache, and of tears, and of suffering. "No Cross, no Crown." No furnace of fire, no purifying of the gold! No suffering, then also no sanctification! No holiness, no heaven!

"The path of Sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where Sorrow is unknown."

One other mistake which Peter, in this wish of his to remain there upon the Mount, made, was: In supposing that anywhere upon this earth of ours, even upon the Mount of Transfiguration, it would be safe or good to build tabernacles and hope for full and permanent enjoyment in them.

Peter said: "Lord, it is good to be here; here let us build tabernacles." But Jesus said: "No! Neither here, nor anywhere else on earth do I wish you to build for yourself a home, and hope to abide in it."

And He says the same to us. How often we feel that it is good to be here, in this place or that, here on earth. How disposed we all are to build tabernacles for ourselves and rest in them, and say: "In these, now, will be our stay." What a beautiful tabernacle, for example, we sometimes build for ourselves of wealth, or of health, or of worldly honor, or of our children and households, and we say to ourselves: "It is good to be here." But adversity comes, and sickness comes, and disap-

pointment comes, and death comes, and our tabernacles fall. And we bow weeping over their ruin. And then, standing by our side, as we gaze thus tearfully upon their wreck, Jesus says to us: "O, disciple of mine, I told you not to build tabernacles for yourself upon earth. It is not good to build tabernacles for thyself anywhere here below, or of any material which this world affords thee. He builds too low who builds below the sky. Build for thyself, by faith, love and hope and holiness, a tabernacle in the world to come, in heaven, the bright and beautiful home of God. There build, for there only canst thou build safely. Tabernacles reared there never fall. There only is the true and abiding "Mount of Transfiguration"; there where the radiant glory of Christ shall forever shine forth; there where Moses and Elias and the Apostles and the Saints of all ages shall hold eternal companionship with thee; there where the bliss of the redeemed shall never end. There thou canst, at last, rightly and safely say: "Lord, here it is good to be; here with Thee; here without sin or sorrow; here where change and disap-

pointment and loss and death never can come; here in this divine abode, blissful, permanent, unfluctuating, everlasting. Lord, here it is good to be; here let us now build tabernacles; here, with Thee and with all Thy saints, in light and glory ineffable and enduring, let us stay forever."

CONCERNING PAUL'S THORN.

TEXT.

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me, and he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."—2 Corinthians xii. 7-9.

The Apostle Paul here gives us a page from his inner or private Christian experience. He takes us, as it were, into his especial confidence, and tells us of something which had befallen him which, for a while at least, was a great sorrow or trouble to him, but which he carried to God in prayer, and which, by His grace, was made the occasion and means of great spiritual blessing to him. He calls it, whatever it was, his "thorn in the flesh": that is, it was

some affliction, or trial of some kind, which was to him annoying and irritating, just as a thorn would have been which had accidentally been run into some sensitive part of his body, and was now lodged and festering there.

Let us study concerning Paul's Thorn in the flesh!

I. WHAT WAS IT?
II. WHY WAS IT GIVEN HIM?
III. WHAT DID HE DO WITH IT?

Let us ask and answer these three questions, in the order stated, and thus seek to understand a most interesting experience in the life of the great Apostle; and an experience, also, whose lessons may be most helpful to us in connection with our "thorns in the flesh."

I. What was this thorn in the Flesh, which was thus given to the Apostle, and of which he here, in our text, speaks?

"There was given to me," he says, "a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me."

I need hardly remind you of the fact that there has been an almost countless number of conjectures concerning the exact nature

or character of this trial which had befallen the Apostle, and which he here, so expressively and almost pathetically calls his "thorn in the flesh." No two expositors seem fully to agree in their judgment of what it was. Some suggest that it was a stuttering or stammering in his speech. Others, that it was a ridiculous or mirth-provoking distortion of his countenance or muscles of his face. Others, that it was a paralytic disorder. Others, that it was an epileptic affection. Others, that it was a weakness or disease of his eyes, an impairment of his sight, the result of the glorious vision of Christ and of Heaven which he beheld at the time of his conversion, on the way to Damascus; St. Chrysostom tells us that it was probably headache; Tertullian, that it was earache; and Rosenmiller, the German critic, desides that it was what he calls "Gout in the head," a periodical disorder which affected his brain. Many of the old Latin fathers, on the other hand, held that it was no physical or bodily disorder at all; that the words, "thorn in the flesh," are used by him entirely in a figurative sense; and that

he meant by them some ungovernable lust, some passion, some temper, some sore spiritual trial or temptation, wrought in him by the agency of the devil; and that he, therefore, very properly speaks of it as "the messenger of Satan to buffet me."

Thus there have been all kinds of opinions, wise and otherwise, in answer to the question: "What was Paul's Thorn in the Flesh?" The simple truth is: we do not know certainly what it was. All that we can, with any assurance, say concerning it is: that it was some kind of humiliating, annoying or painful affliction. Most probably it was some bodily deformity or infirmity. Possibly there was such an impression or effect produced upon him at his conversion, or later, when he was, as he tells us here in the context, once caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words which it was not possible for him to utter, as to leave some permanent physical infirmity; affecting, as we may gather, here and there from his epistles, his appearance, his sight, his speech, his hands. For you remember that he generally wrote his epistles, save a few trem-

ulous lines at their close, by the hand of an amanuensis. You remember, also, how he speaks, in one place of his "temptation or trial which was in his flesh"; how he tells us that his bodily presence was weak, and his speech contemptible"; how he speaks of himself as "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus"; and how, here in our text, in speaking of this thorn, he speaks of it specifically as "a thorn in the flesh". And, besides, he here adds, that, since divine strength was made manifest to him in connection with this weakness, or trial, he "glories in his weakness or infirmity": something which he surely would and could not have done had this "thorn in the flesh" been, as some have suggested, some moral trial, some spiritual temptation, some weakness in his Christian character or life.

Summing up, then, all the probabilities in the case, we conclude that Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was a bodily disorder of some kind; some physical defect; or painful or humiliating distortion of his face, perhaps; or some weakness, perhaps, in his vision or eye-sight;

or some defect, perhaps, in his speech; or some nervous or epileptic or paralytic infirmity; something, whatever it was, that could manifestly be seen by others and that rendered him, as he thought, weak in his influence and power over others, that made him to some an object of remark and ridicule, and even of contempt, and that, therefore, at times, greatly mortified and humbled him.

And, besides, he also felt that Satan, in some way was the author of it: that, while God allowed the thorn, it was yet a thorn of the devil's planting, and was designed by the Evil One, not only for his annoyance and distress personally, but was especially designed to weaken his Christian influence, and to diminish his power, as an Apostle of Christ and as a Preacher of the Gospel. It was, he felt, "the messenger of Satan to buffet him."

And this feature of it was to him an especial element of humiliation and distress: the sharpest point of the thorn, the point that entered deepest into his soul, and that hurt him most. He chafed and fretted under the sense that he in any way, should be under Satan's

power, and that the devil should in any way interfere with his work for Christ.

But, has Satan power over human bodies? Has he power to inflict disease? With divine permission, he certainly has. He clearly did so in the case of Job. He did so in the case of the poor woman whom Jesus healed on the Sabbath day, and whom He declared "Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years." He also clearly had this power and sadly exercised it, too, in all the many instances of "Demoniacal Possession" recorded in the New Testament. And so here, in this case of Paul's Thorn in the Flesh, he expressly assigns it to Satan's agency. God, of course, permitted it; but Satan inflicted it. Satan gave it to him in malice, and God allowed him to do so, and then over-ruled it for good. In the end, as is always the case in "thorns" of the devil's planting, it became much more of a "thorn in the flesh" to the devil himself than it ever was to the Apostle.

And now, whilst having said so much about Paul's "thorn in the flesh," let me add that Paul is not the only Christian who went

through life with a "thorn in the flesh." He is, indeed, in this respect, only a representative of the condition of all Christians. His experience, in this respect, is the ideal of all genuine Christian experience. You and I, as Christians, also, either literally or figuratively speaking, either physically or spiritually, have our "thorns in the flesh:" not Paul's thorn perhaps, not any one's else thorn exactly; but still a "thorn," a real thorn, our own personal or individual thorn.

Any great trial that has come upon us: bodily pain of some kind, continued ill health, disappointed hopes, frustrated plans in life, loss of wealth, some buried sorrow in our domestic life, the slander of some enemy, the betrayal of our confidence by some once trusted friend, the continued impenitence and wickedness of some precious acquaintance or relative, the death of loved ones dear to us as life itself, struggles with poverty and anxiety for our future wants, sorrow over the low condition of the Church, grief because of the Christian inconsistencies of others, and lamentation especially over some humiliating spiritual weak

ness or "besetting sin" of our own; all these are now "thorns in the flesh" in Christian experience. One or the other of these, or of some yet other similar experience, is the "thorn in the flesh" now of every true child of God. We all, as we walk heavenward, carry buried somewhere in our being, a weakness, an infirmity, a special temptation, a great hidden sorrow, of some kind, known, perhaps, only to God and to ourselves, which is our "thorn in the flesh."

II. But let us now inquire, as our second question: Why was this "thorn in the flesh" thus given to the Apostle?

The divine purpose in it, Paul himself here plainly declares. It was given him, that is, God allowed Satan to give it to him, "lest he should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations" with which he had been favored. By that expression: "the abundance of the revelations," he evidently refers to the ecstatic trance, related in the context, in which, as he tells us, he was caught up into Paradise, and was favored with such a glorious and rapturous vision of the future life of

God's people that words utterly failed him, inspired as he was, to describe it. His language is: "I knew a man in Christ, about fourteen years ago, whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth, such an one caught up to the third heavens; and I knew such a man, whether in the body or out of the body, God knoweth, how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful, or possible, for a man to utter." Who was this man? Evidently, as the whole context shows, it was Paul himself. He was "the man in Christ," or the Christian man, who had been thus highly favored with this celestial vision.

But, right in this now, lay, also, as God saw, his spiritual danger. Great gifts, and even great spiritual graces, are always sources of great spiritual peril. So here, in this special divine favor vouchsafed the Apostle, there lurked a source to him of real spiritual danger. What was it? Why, danger of spiritual pride; danger of self-conceit; danger of vain personal elation; danger that he would grow

proud of the fact that God had thus singled him out and granted to him what He granted to no others; danger that he might feel: "I, Paul, am more than an ordinary Christian; am endowed with gifts superior to others; am favored of God above others." That, I say, was Paul's especial spiritual danger, at that time, because of the especial spiritual exaltation and honor which had been placed on him in the vision of celestial glory which he had just enjoyed.

And now, because of this spiritual danger to which he was thus exposed, in order to save him from the spiritual pride and self-conceit, and self-sufficiency, which would have been a great weakness in his Christian character, and would have robbed him of that fine Christian power which springs from humility and lowliness of spirit, there was given him this "thorn in the flesh," this "messenger of Satan to buffet him," to keep him humble, to check his rising vanity, to take him down or keep him down from any high pedestal of self-glorification to which otherwise he might have mounted. As he himself says, "Lest I

should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me."

Thus to humble His children, to save them from the spiritual dangers to which, because of His very goodness to them, because of the superior gifts with which He has endowed them, and graces He has bestowed on them, and positions to which He has exalted them, and honors and influence with which He has crowned them, He often finds it necessary, along with His abundant revelations of His goodness to them, also to give them some trial, some affliction, some sorrow, some "thorn in the flesh" of some kind, to humble them, to take them out of all conceit of themselves, and to keep them in lowly and humble dependence upon Him.

It is with this divine purpose of love; with this intent, on God's part, to impart to us thorns to buffet us in life's experience: thorns not only in our flesh, but often also in the very marrow and quick of our souls. It is all done for our good. God's thorns hurt;

but still they all have a blessing in them. And God plants them in our being, and allows others to plant them there, not because He delights in our quivering suffering as they pierce and force their way into us, and then often remain lodged in us, as sources of conscious weakness and self-humiliation to us, down to the very close of our earthly existence, but only because, as in Paul's case, He means to give to us some richer and higher spiritual experience and greater spiritual power than we, without them, could possibly attain.

And what effective cures for our vanity, and self-righteousness, and spiritual pride, these "thorns in the flesh" are! Has God given you some specially fine endowment; some "talent" or "gift" which lifts you above most of your fellow men? Has He granted you some special spiritual favor: some unusual religious experience, some clearness of spiritual vision, some specially joyous communion with God? And now, you, perhaps, are spiritually proud of this divine exaltation; or, if not, there is, at least, danger than you will

be. And so God gives you a "thorn," some trial, or sorrow, to keep you humble and dependent on Him. Or the "thorn," perhaps, is some great conscious defect in your Christian character: your ungovernable temper, your hasty speech, your uncharitable spirit, your inconsistent life, your selfishness showing itself in a hundred ways: weakness in yourself of which you are heartily ashamed, thorns which sting you into moral self-loathing, so that, instead of being proud or vain of your spiritual strength or of your superior piety and goodness, you lie humbled in the dust under an abasing sense of your spiritual weakness and sinfulness and you despise yourself. And hence, paradoxical as it may appear, the holier you grow, the greater also under this discipline of God will become your sense of your unholiness; so that, at last, like Paul himself, in the last epistle which he wrote, you will cast away from you every vestige of self-righteousness, and will rely only on the merits of Christ for salvation, saying: "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation,

that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief."

Blessed be God, then, for these "thorns in the flesh," these experiences of our Christian life which make us conscious of our spiritual weakness, which humble us, which drive and hold us to God, which cause us to cling always and only, for pardon, and strength, and salvation, to the Lord Jesus Christ!

III. But we must now yet consider: What Paul did with his thorn.

He did with it simply what was the wisest and most Christian thing that he could have done, namely: he carried it to Christ in prayer.

It was a great annoyance and humiliation and real grief to him; and hence he wanted very much to get rid of it and to go on through life without it. And so he prayed earnestly and repeatedly for its removal. "For this thing," he says, "I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me."

In all this he did entirely right. A "thorn in the flesh" of no kind is pleasant; neither are thorns of any kind, in themselves, apart from God's grace, a blessing. By God's grace,

sanctifying us under them and through them, they can be made to us very great blessings, but in themselves, I repeat, they are no blessings. And hence Paul very properly submitted his thorn in prayer to the Lord, and asked Him, if it was in accordance with His will, to take it out, to relieve him of it. Jesus did the same with His great trial or sorrow in the Garden of Gethsemane. He also there prayed three times that the cup, "if possible," might be removed from Him.

And this is the privilege of each one of us, also, in all our trials of life, of whatever character. Whatever may be the "thorn" that pierces us, we are justifiable in asking God to remove it from us. Some of our thorns we ought, indeed, pray God very vigorously and persistently to get out of us; e. g., all those bad thorns of our remaining depravity; the thorns of sin and selfishness that are purely of Satan's planting, that are always and only a moral weakness in us and an injury to others, and that God wants to rid us of as soon as possible: for the removal of all that bad lot of thorns let us daily pray.

But we are justifiable, also, in praying God, if it be His will, to remove from us any thorn that pierces us, that is, any sorrow, any trial of life under which we may be suffering.

But was Paul's thorn in answer to his prayer divinely removed? No. It was not. God saw best, both for Paul's own highest good, and for the greatest good, through Paul, to others, that it should not be taken away. That thorn had a blessing in it, both for Paul and for many others. And so, painful and humiliating and trying to the blessed man as it was, God did not, even in answer to his earnest prayer, take it away. He kept it there; and Paul, I suppose, carried that "thorn" of his down with him all through life. God does not always grant even to the holiest of His children what they pray for: simply because He knows better than they do what is best for them.

Their prayers, however, are still not unanswered. God may not, as here in Paul's case, give them just the very thing for which they pray. He will yet, however, always, in answer to their prayers give them something; and

always, also, will He give them something much better than they had asked for.

It was so here in Paul's case. The "thorn" was not removed as he had prayed that it might be; but Paul received, in answer to his prayer, such a precious promise from God that he could, indeed, well afford to keep his thorn. That promise was: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." A promise which, fully interpreted, means, "Keep your thorn, Paul. It is painful to you, I know; and, as your Heavenly Father, I feel for you as you suffer under it. It is not, however, best to take it away. It is best for you and for others that it remain. But this I now promise you: I will give you very especial grace to bear it; I will make that thorn of yours a very spring of richest spiritual blessings to you; I will so bless and comfort and strengthen you under all that you suffer from it, that, instead of not wanting it, you will come to thank and praise me for it." This is what God promised.

And all that God thus promised to the

Apostle, He, also, gloriously fulfilled. And hence, fourteen years afterward, when Paul wrote this epistle, he thanks God for his "thorn." It had been the occasion of great spiritual strength and blessing to him. It had secured for him wonderful experiences of God's grace. It had been a means to his sanctification. It had brought him steadily nearer to God. It had increased his spiritual power in the ministry. It had ripened him for Heaven. And so he blessed God for his "thorn." "Most gladly, therefore," he exclaims, "will I rather glory in mine infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

But this Promise, Christian Friends, is ours as well as Paul's. To us, as well as to him, God says: "My grace is sufficient for thee." To us, too, He says: "The pain and burden of your thorn I will help you to bear, and I will make it a blessing to you, and you will come eventually to praise me for it."

And so He will. For every sorrow of life His grace will be sufficient for us. Every trial has a blessing in it for us. For every

thorn that now pierces us we shall praise and bless God eternally.

Have you, then, Christian Friends, any special sorrow, or weakness, or sin: any "thorn" that has entered your soul and is distressing you? Do with it as Paul did with his: carry it to God in prayer! If, by His grace, He does not remove it from you, He will do for you something infinitely better: He will give you grace to bear it and grace to sanctify it to you, and grace to comfort you under it, and grace to strengthen you spiritually through it, and grace to save you by it; so that, at last, when you have reached heaven, you will look back over your earth-life; and think of your "thorn" and will say: "Blessed Thorn! How much I owe to it! God, I thank Thee for having ever given me that thorn."

PAUL'S UNWAVERING CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST.

TEXT.

"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."—2 Timothy i. 2.

There is nothing that gives us such assurance of the reality and blessedness of our holy Christian religion as the testimony to its preciousness by the dying. We feel that a religion that in that hour sustains and comforts and gladdens the soul, possesses indeed divine power, and is all that it claims, and all that we desire and need.

Such dying testimony in favor of the sustaining power and comfort of Christ and Christianity, St. Paul gives here in these words of our text. He had often borne his testimony to its divine character in his active lifetime, when in health and strength, and when death

was yet in the distant future. But now, shut up in a Roman prison, forsaken by friends, aged, expecting each moment to be led out to a martyr's cruel death—how now? "More precious now," he answers, "than ever. More convinced of its divine reality now than I have ever been. It is now all that I could possibly desire; Christ is to me now an all-sufficient, a divine Saviour. My faith in Him now sustains, cheers, strengthens me. I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

Let us analyze this hopeful and confident language of the great apostle, and see how much there is in it to stimulate our faith and to brighten our hope.

The subject which it presents is:

"The Apostle's Faith:" And concerning this faith of his, he here tells us three things, namely:

I. The Object of His Faith: "Whom I have believed."

II. The Nature of His Faith: "That which I have committed to Him against that day." And then,

III. The Certainty of His Faith: "I know Whom I have believed. I am persuaded," that is, convinced, certain, assured beyond a doubt.

Let us look at these three thoughts.

I. The Object of His Trust.

That Object was not a thing, but a Person. It was a belief, not in a "religion," but in a Redeemer; a faith, not in Christianity, but in Christ; a trust, not in a plan of salvation, but in a Saviour; not in a creed only, but a Christ; and not a Christ only, but the Christ; the Christ of actual fact, the Christ of scripture, the "God Man," as set forth in the gospel, incarnate, atoning, risen, ascended, glorified. It was faith in Christ as a person; a trust of himself as a being to Christ as a being, to save him. And hence he does not here say, "I know what I have believed," but he says, "I know Whom I have believed." And he does not

even say, as he might, "in Whom," but directly "Whom"; as though he would not allow even so small a thing as that little preposition "in" to come between him and Christ; meaning thus to teach us that his faith rested directly and solidly, not on something about Christ, or relating to Christ, but on Christ Himself, His very person, as well as His work.

And true, saving faith is always thus faith in Christ as a "person." "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent." And again we are repeatedly told: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," not simply on something concerning Him, but on Him, on Him directly, as a person, "and thou shalt be saved."

And so everywhere in the Bible. Its one command to every inquiring soul is: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, the divine human person, the One only all-sufficient Saviour, Son of God and Son of man, offered of God as a Saviour, and thou shalt be saved." All creeds and all systems of theology and all the teachings of the church concerning Christ, in

so far as they are indeed the teachings of God's word concerning Christ, are, of course, divine truth and must be accepted, and, because they are God's word concerning salvation, there can be no saving faith, no salvation, without accepting them. But there is such a thing as accepting truth concerning Christ without savingly accepting Christ. Hence, the sacred Scriptures say: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Now right here lies a source of very great spiritual danger to us all. We are in danger of believing something about Christ. That "something" may be all true, and just what we ought to believe, and must believe, in order to be saved, and yet not be all that we must believe, or the vital thing that we must believe in order to be saved. A Christian Creed is all true, but it is all only a formulated statement of truth concerning Christ. It is not itself Christ, but only something about Christ. And hence, he whose object of faith is his creed, however thoroughly Christian and orthodox, and who rests in his acceptance as divine truth of its articles, who goes in faith thus far and

no farther, has not yet truly and savingly believed. We must not only believe all that the Scriptures teach about Christ, but we must also believe Christ; not the doctrine only, but the living divine Saviour-Person.

The two things surely are not the same. There is certainly a vital difference between believing even true things concerning Christ, and, in the Scriptural sense of saving faith or trust, believing Christ. In the one case, we give intellectual assent to the truth; in the other, we give ourselves in trust to the Being of whom the truth speaks. In the one, we are logically convinced of what we ought to do concerning Christ; in the other we act upon our convictions, and positively do what we are convinced we ought to do. In the one case, we intellectually accept a System of Christian Doctrine; in the other, we cast ourselves helplessly for Salvation upon a Personal, Living, Divine Saviour. In the one case, in a word, we give the consent of our judgment, the approval of our conscience; in the other, we give our supreme affections, our act of will, our individual choice of Christ, our full sur-

render of ourselves to Him, the confident repose of our soul upon the beating heart of Christ.

And this brings us now to notice:

II. The nature of Paul's faith.

As expressed here in our text. To see the difference of which I have spoken between believing even Bible truth concerning Christ and believing Christ, notice carefully how Paul here describes the exact character of his faith in Christ. What was the exact character of his faith? What, in its essential nature, was his faith? Study his language, as he here describes it. It was, he tells us, you will observe, an act. He did something with himself toward Christ. He represents himself as having given something to Christ to keep for him. "That which I have committed unto Him against that day." And what had Paul thus given or committed to Christ for safe-keeping? Himself, His own soul, that soul which through sin was lost, which he himself could not save, which Christ only could save. That soul of his, that is, himself, he tells us, by an act of his will, as

an act of trust, he had deliberately taken from his own keeping and laid on the Outstretched and Almighty Arms of Christ to keep for him.

Paul's Faith, therefore, you see, was more than an "opinion": it was an "act." It was more than believing something concerning Christ: it was an actual giving something to Christ. And that "something" was the most precious thing he had: his own soul, his immortality, his destiny for eternity. All that, as if he had reached into himself and taken himself out of himself, and then carried himself to Christ, he thus trusted, for safe-keeping; to Christ, with fullest confidence of its perfect safety there. Just as you might take your most precious jewels, or your most valuable papers, or your most costly treasures of any kind, and carry them to a "Bank of Deposit," and say: "Keep these for me; in my keeping they are not safe; in yours they are." It was a committing, a committing or giving of himself, for safe-keeping, to Christ.

And that, and nothing less than that, is just what saving faith is. Not in the case of Paul's salvation only, but in yours, and in

mine, and in the case of all persons: only he who thus believes on Christ is saved. Only he that thus, as a perishing sinner, gives himself to Christ as a real, living, personal, divine Saviour, is saved.

To illustrate this nature of faith as an act of the soul's full trust of itself for salvation upon Christ, suppose you and I had engaged passage for Liverpool upon the same ocean steamer. The vessel is ready to sail, and we stand together upon the wharf before her. She is a grand vessel. As we stand there and look at her I am carried away with admiration of her. I praise her fine proportions, her symmetry, her magnitude, her elegance. I tell those around what a magnificent steamer she is. I tell of the many successful voyages she has made. But now, when the time comes to go on board of her, to trust myself to her, with all my fine talking about her, I am afraid. I refuse to risk myself on her. I say: "She may sink, and I perish; I will stay where I am." Now, have I faith in that vessel? Yes, some faith, but not a sufficient faith; not the faith of trust, of self-committal; not the faith

which will move me to put myself on the vessel, and which I need in order to get myself across the sea and into the destined foreign harbor. You have that needed confidence in her; you put yourself trustingly on her; and you are carried safely across. Your faith is a trust; it leads you to act; it moves you to commit yourself, your very life, your whole being to that vessel. If she sinks, you sink. But you have faith in her to believe that she will not sink, and hence you give yourself to her. And that is the nature of saving faith in Christ. Like Paul's, it is a committing of one's self to Christ. It is, by an act of your soul or will, putting yourself on Christ, just as, by an act of your will, you put yourself in trust on that vessel.

Dr. Chalmers, it is said, on one occasion, went, as a pastor, to visit a lady who was under deep conviction of sin, but who could not somehow rightly understand and exercise saving faith in Christ as her Saviour from sin. In front of her home was a small stream of water, across which was a board or plank. As the Doctor approached her home and came to

this plank he saw that it was weak, and hesitated for a moment to trust himself on it. The lady saw him and called out to him: "Put yourself boldly on it, Doctor; it will bear you." And so, when he had reached the home, and was trying to simplify to the woman the nature of faith in Christ, and tell her what believing in Christ was, he used her own language to him: to trust himself on the plank, as an illustration. He told her that thus just as he, trusting her word, had put himself on that plank, so she, trusting God's Word, must put herself on Christ. "Is that faith?" she asked. "Is that all that saving faith is?" "That," he said, "is saving faith. That only is. He that thus believes on Christ is saved." "How simple," she exclaimed. "I see it all now. I do thus now commit my soul for salvation to Him."

And that, Christian friends, is true saving faith: it is, by the power given us by the Holy Ghost, a putting of ourselves as sinners on Christ as a Saviour: a full trusting of ourselves to Him for salvation.

And now notice:

III. The Strength or Assurance of Paul's Faith.

Having thus committed his soul to Christ, did he feel uncertain or doubtful about the safety of his soul in the keeping of Christ? Not in the least. On the contrary, his faith rises into highest assurance. He has given his soul to Christ to keep for him, to save, to preserve for him. And he knows that He also can and will do it. He does not only hope that he will be saved, or expect, or think, that he will be, but he knows that he will be. He is sure that he will be. His faith is a certainty. "I know," he exclaims, "whom I have believed;" no mere man, no angel, no highest archangel, but one diviner and greater than all—the God-Man, the Almighty Saviour, Christ Jesus, "able to save unto the uttermost;" and this being the character of Him to Whom I have committed my soul, I am sure that in His hands it is safe. He, I am persuaded, convinced, assured beyond a doubt, is able to keep it against that day. Even in the Great Judgment Day, when the heavens shall be wrapped in flame, and the earth shall be dis-

solved, and all nature shall tremble under the footstep of the descending Judge, and men's hearts shall be filled with fear, and even the great ones of earth shall call upon the mountains and rocks to hide them from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, even then I shall be secure. He will keep me. He is able to keep me. He has promised to keep me. Committed as I am in His hands, I cannot possibly perish." Or, as elsewhere he expresses it: "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus." What strong assurance, what certainty of faith such language expresses. But such was Paul's faith. He knew Whom he had believed. "I am persuaded," he exclaims, "of the full ability of Jesus Christ to save me." Such was Paul's assurance of his salvation.

And you notice it is an assurance that is all based on what Christ is, and not in any respect because of anything that he himself is. All

that he has done is just, as a poor sinner, unable to save himself, to throw himself on Christ to save him; and then, because of Christ's promise and Christ's ability, feel sure that he will be saved. He himself is weak, but Christ is strong; unworthy, but Christ is worthy; sinful, but Christ is holy; a perishing soul, but Christ is an Omnipotent Saviour. And so Paul, as you notice, has no doubt whatever about his salvation, simply because he never forgets in Whose hands his salvation is; how great a Saviour his Saviour is; how absolutely impossible it is for any soul that has trustingly laid itself for salvation into Christ's hands ever to drop out of them into eternal death. "My salvation," he cries, "is sure, for I know Whom I have believed, and am assured that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day. Not I, but He."

Christian Friends, this assurance of faith which Paul thus possessed, you and I, as Christians, ought to possess. Its possession is both our privilege and our duty. We both dishonor our Saviour and we rob ourselves by not having it. Why should we not possess

it? If Christ is able to save at all, He is able to save fully. If His blood has sufficient atoning power in it to blot out one single sin it has atoning power enough in it to blot out the whole record. If He is able to bring us part way towards heaven, He is able to bring us all the way. He is either no Saviour at all, or else He is a perfect, an all-sufficient, an Almighty Saviour.

And such absolutely perfect Saviour is just the kind of Saviour the Scriptures everywhere exhibit Him. "Mighty to save"; "able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God through Him"; His blood "blood that cleanses from all sin"; both "the Author and Finisher of our Faith"; both "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

Thus great and perfect a Saviour is Christ. How worthy, then, of our perfect trust. And hence how we dishonor Him by not fully trusting ourselves, as Paul did, to Him. Being in Himself "the fullness of the Godhead bodily," an infinite, boundless, inexhaustible

ocean of grace and salvation, how we wrong Him by withholding from Him our full faith, as though, possibly after all, we could not safely trust our all to Him.

And yet many professing Christians do, just in that half-measure way, believe on Christ. They have never yet risen up to the assurance of faith. They have never yet come to say: "I know Whom I have believed," "I am persuaded, convinced, assured, of the full pardon of all my sins, of my reconciliation to God, of my adoption as His child of the entire safety of my soul in the keeping of Christ." They have never come, I say, into the Pauline positiveness and fulness, and certainty of faith. They walk only in the dim twilight of Christian confidence. Their best Christian vocabulary can say only, "I think, I hope." Their piety can speak only in the subjunctive mood: "Possibly I may be saved."

Paul, on the contrary, knew. "I know Whom I have believed; I am sure that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him." And John knew. "We know," he cries, "that we have passed from death unto

life." And Peter knew. "Thou," he exclaims, "art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." And Thomas knew. "My Lord and my God," is the glad utterance of his assured faith. And Job knew. "I know that my Redeemer liveth." And thousands and millions of God's saints have thus known, walking through life in the abiding assurance of their acceptance with God, and of the certainty of their salvation, because their faith rested unshaken upon God's pledged word in Christ. Not because of what they were in themselves, but because of what Christ was, and because of what Christ had suffered and done for them, and because of what God had in His Word promised to them for Christ's sake, which Word of God their faith fully accepted and trusted, they knew that they were saved. Not that they would be saved, but were now already saved. Their salvation was not merely a hope, but an assurance, a blessed certainty. With Paul they could say: "I know."

And then, how we, also, by this feebleness of our faith in Christ as our Saviour, rob ourselves.

If Christ is what the Scriptures say to us that He is, and what Paul took and found Him to be, and what to thousands and millions of Christians, in all ages, He has, by blessed experience, proven Himself to be, then we have in Him a fulness of salvation for every want of our spiritual being, both for this life and for the life to come. By faith we may reach out and take to ourselves from Him a supply for our every possible want. Taking Him, we have all.

Is it pardon of our sins we want? Is it reconciliation to God we want? Is it comfort under the sorrows of life we want? Is it strength for life's duties we want? Is it power over temptation we want? Is it deliverance from the dominion of sin within us that we want? Is it holiness and greater likeness to God we want? Is it assurance of salvation we want? Is it triumph over death we want? Is it the resurrection of our bodies, the blissful immortality of our souls, is it heaven and holiness and happiness and home eternally with God we want? Oh, if our faith would but lay hold on them, they are all laid up for

us in Christ, and offered to us, as our unlimited possession in Christ!

"All things," says Paul, in his letter to the Corinthian Christians, "all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's." And writing to the Romans, he says: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

Thus is Christ, as a Saviour, a great infinite treasure house both of grace now and of glory hereafter. In Him is offered to us an abundant supply for every need. Empty, we can fill ourselves with the very fulness of God. Sinful, we can through Him be made white as the driven snow. Dead, in Him we can have life, and can have it abundantly. "Christ Jesus," says Paul, "is of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." What a sweep of blessings, both for time and for eternity, that includes! How it embraces the whole circle of our wants

both now and forever! The soul, means the Apostle, that has Christ, has all. Or as the poet has sung:

"Jesus Christ is my All in All,
My Comfort and my Love;
My Life below, and He shall be
My Joy and Crown above."

UN-UPLIFTED SAVIOUR THE GREAT ATTRACTION.

TEXT.

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."—John xii. 32.

In some relation, when Jesus died upon the Cross of Calvary, every rational and spiritual being in all the universe fixed its eye upon Him and turned, as it were, to behold and consider that awful tragedy which was there, in His Death, transpiring. All with feelings of some kind, as He here in our Text predicts, were drawn to Him.

God, His Divine Father, was then drawn to Him; every attribute of the Godhead interested; divine love melted into pity, divine justice satisfied, divine holiness vindicated and gloriously revealed.

The Angelic Hosts of Heaven were then drawn to Him, lost in wonder over that mystery of mysteries, the death, in agony and shame, for sinful man, of Him Whom in His

celestial glory they had worshipped as their Divine Lord and King.

Satan, also, and all his fallen spirits, in that hour, were then drawn to the sight of that uplifted Christ, knowing that then, by that wondrous death, their sceptre of moral dominion over man was being broken, and that the lost human race was then being delivered from their thralldom and restored again to God.

And, to that Uplifted Dying Saviour were also then drawn all classes, and all conditions, and all characters of human spectators. The prejudiced and malignant Scribes and Pharisees, rejoicing in their supposed victory, at last, over Him; the embittered and raging Jewish Multitude crying out: "His blood be upon us and upon our children"; the noble company of Holy Women, faithful to Him even when boasting Apostles had forsaken Him and fled; the Convicted Centurian, testifying: "Truly this was the Son of God"; the Penitent Thief, meekly praying: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom"; the Rough Soldiers, plunging the cruel Spear into His

Holy side, and casting lots for His seamless robe; the Beloved Disciple John, standing silently and gazing up with tearful look of sympathy and love into His marred and sorrow-stricken face; His Mother, into whose soul, at last, as the aged Simeon long before had predicted, the sword had indeed entered; the Awe-Struck Spectators, filled with alarm as they beheld the Sun veil himself in darkness, the earth quake, the Temple Veil rend itself in twain from top to bottom, the Rocks rend, the Graves open, the Sheeted and Buried leap into life—all these were observers of that dying scene of the Son of God, and beheld as He, the Uplifted and Atoning Saviour then and there laid down His life as a ransom for guilty man.

Literally, then, did Jesus, "lifted up on the Cross," draw all to Him. God and Man, Heaven and Hell, Earth and Sky, Friend and Foe, Angels both of light and of darkness, Beings both visible and invisible, incarnate and unincarnate, all, all, all, in that pivotal hour in the world's history, either in love or in hate, either in friendship or in enmity, were attract-

ed, directed, "drawn," to Him who there expired as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. Yes: the Universe gathered there; and beheld and listened; and, in some way, were all affected by that wondrous death which was there endured. The beams of moral influence, radiating from that uplifted Cross of Christ, like the out-going rays of some brilliant calcium light, rose up to Heaven, pierced down into the very darkness of Hell, and illumined the whole wide universe of God. Then, being there, on the Cross, lifted up, Jesus did, as He foretold, draw all, literally all, all nature, all men, all angels, all fiends, all beings, human, angelic, spiritual, divine unto Himself. "And I if I be lifted up on the Cross from the earth there to die as I will, an atoning death, I will, by My death, and in My very act of dying, draw all, as to one great center, unto Me."

But these words of Jesus have a deeper signification than this merely historical or literal one. They possessed in His mind, when He uttered them, an infinitely higher sense. Prophetically they express also a great spiritual

fact: a present and ever abiding spiritual truth; a divine promise, left to the Church as a legacy from her Ascended Lord, even to the end of time, for guidance and encouragement, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."

By this Jesus means, we may say,

THAT IF HE BE MORALLY AND SPIRITUALLY LIFTED UP, HE WILL MORALLY AND SPIRITUALLY DRAW MEN TO HIMSELF.

The Uplifted Christ is still the great Attraction. Jesus, if held up rightly before the world, will now as ever, draw to Himself the World.

"If I be lifted up; if I be spiritually lifted up by My Church before the world, as the world's one and only Saviour; if I be preached truly and faithfully by My Ministry; if I be exhibited aright in the holy life and character of My people; if I be labored for earnestly, by mind and heart and tongue and time and talent and influence and wealth and sacrifice, on the part of all My professed disciples; if I be thus "lifted up," if only this one simple condition be complied with, then will I draw all

men unto Me, all classes, all ages, all characters. Then will I convict, convert, sanctify and save all kinds of souls. Then, as the magnet draws to itself the filings of steel, as the moon moves and sways under her influence the tides of the sea, as the sun attracts and holds in their orbits the worlds and planets of the great Solar System, so will I also, by My attractive grace, by the divine moral magnetism of My Being and Character, gather to myself the nations, and everywhere draw to Myself the hearts of the children of men. Then will I build Zion as a City, and then will I cause My glory to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea."

Such, I believe, is the deep spiritual signification of this language of the Saviour; and this is the great spiritual truth which here, in these words, He inculcates.

But is this, indeed, a truth? Does Jesus, if presented aright to the hearts and consciences of the children of men, thus draw them unto Himself? Is there this spiritual "attractiveness" in the Uplifted Christ? For your answer turn to the history, for a moment, of

the Christian Church. On every page of that history from the very birthday of Christianity down to this present hour, there may be found an abundance of confirmation. From every part of it flashes out the evidence that an earnest faithful "lifting up" of Christ, by the Ministry and by the Church, has always resulted in the drawing of men to Christ, in their conviction, conversion, salvation. John the Baptist thus in the Wilderness of Judea and on the banks of the Jordan uplifted Him, saying to all around: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world," and some immediately became His disciples. Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, thus uplifted Him, and, at once, drawn by the magnetism of His grace, three thousand convicted and penitent souls believed on Him and confessed Him as their Saviour. Paul, also, thus uplifted Him, in Rome, in Thessalonica, in Corinth, in Philippi, in Athens, in innumerable places and nations, everywhere with earnest eloquence pointing men to Him as their one only Redeemer, bidding all "Believe on Him if they would be saved," and lo! everywhere multi-

tudes, drawn to Him by the preciousness of His character and His divine ability to satisfy all the deep longings of their hearts, did believe on Him and found in Him the peace and life for which they sought. And thus also did all the Apostles uplift Him, beginning at Jerusalem, then finding their way to the ends of the earth, holding Him up in the streets of Rome and even in the palace of the Cæsars, in Scythia on the north, in distant India on the east, in Gaul on the west, in Egypt and Ethiopia on the south, everywhere publishing Him as the Divine Christ, as Jesus and the Resurrection, as the one only and sufficient Saviour for sinful and sorrowful and perishing humanity; and soon, as the result of such uplifting of Christ, Christianity became the victorious and acknowledged Religion of the civilized world. This new Faith, whose symbol was the Cross, seated itself upon the mighty throne of the Roman Empire, silenced the wisdom of the Schools, closed the Temples of Paganism, put out the fires of sacrifice upon the altars of heathen idolatry, and everywhere reared Houses of Prayer and Praise and Wor-

ship, in the name of Christ, to the one only true God. Thus, by the Uplifting of Christ, did Christ draw, in the early days of Christianity, all the World to Himself.

And thus, also, in all the centuries since those early and grand aggressive days of primitive Christianity, whenever and wherever He has been truly lifted up by His Church before the World, rightly lived and proclaimed by those who called themselves His disciples, Jesus has drawn souls to Himself and saved them. Always, as He here in our text promises, has He proved Himself the World's great moral attraction. When Wickliffe, for example, "bright Morning-star of the Reformation," uplifted Him in England; when John Huss uplifted Him in Bohemia; when Luther so bravely and faithfully uplifted Him in Germany; when Calvin and Zwingle uplifted Him in Geneva, and throughout the Valleys, and over the Alpine Mountains of Switzerland; when courageous John Knox uplifted Him in Scotland; when Wesley and Whitfield uplifted Him first in the Old World, and then here in the New; when the dear Moravians up-

lifted Him in Greenland and in the West Indies: when Ziegenbalg, and Schwartz, and Carey uplifted Him in India; and Judson in Burmah; and Henry Martyn in Persia; and Robert Morison in China; and David Brainerd and John Eliot and the Swedish Lutherans upon the banks of the Delaware, before the landing of Penn, among the American Indians; and Moffat and Livingstone and Officer and Day uplifted Him in Africa; everywhere, in all these places, throughout all these widely scattered lands, among all these greatly diversified tongues and peoples. He did also draw all men unto Him. Everywhere the simple story of the Cross had divine power. Everywhere it was clothed with mighty attraction. Everywhere it won its way into men's souls, subduing their stubborn wills, conquering their love of sin, melting their hard hearts into penitence, bowing them in faith at the feet of Jesus, and influencing them to embrace and confess Him as their Lord and Saviour. Our text, then, expresses an undeniable fact, a glorious and most encouraging truth, namely, that Jesus, if He be spiritually lifted up, will

also spiritually draw men to Him, in nearness of character and life, and save them.

From this truth we may now, in conclusion, learn two practical lessons.

We may learn from it a lesson of Personal Duty. That duty is to lift up Jesus; and so to lift Him up that the world may see Him clearly and fully, and in no clouded or distorted or erroneous vision, but in all His real and true divine-human self, Son of God and Son of Man, able and willing Saviour of all who will believe on Him, just as He stands here revealed to us by the Holy Ghost in the written Word. For, only when He is thus rightly lifted up, will, or can He draw men to Himself.

Our World, now as ever, is a lost World. Men everywhere are in the way of sin and death. In our own day, and here in our own land, sin appears especially to abound. We seem to have come in our national history to a great moral and religious crisis. The forces of evil stand massed today, as perhaps never before, against Christ and His Church; numerous, skillful, bold, defiant, malignant, united,

mighty. Skepticism, Ritualism, Rationalism, Mormonism, Communism, Rumism, Anti-Sabbathism, all these stand marshaled, today, here in our land, against our holy Protestant Christian Faith. Scorn for the Bible as the Word of God; Desecration of the Lord's Day; Contempt for Authority, human and divine; Profanity; Lewdness; Intemperance; Worldliness and Mad Thirst for Wealth; Wicked Monopolies and Heartless Trusts; Socialism and Bitter Hate on the part of the Poor against the Rich; Decay of the Home-Life and of Home Government and Education of the Young; Degeneracy of the Moral Tone of the Secular Press; Wide-Spread Dissemination of Infidel and Corrupting Literature; Low Views of the Sanctity of the Marriage Relation and an alarming Increase of Divorces; Political Corruption and Prostitution of Political Parties at the feet of saloonists and hoodlums, begging for their suffrage; Infidelity scoffing at Christianity; and Atheism, calling itself Agnosticism, hooting God out of His Universe; alas! what a hideous catalogue of moral foes and dangers this is which is today cursing

our land and threatening us with national ruin!

And what is the remedy for it all? How shall all this dreadful on-rushing tide of sin be stayed, and rolled back again, and our dear land be saved from its engulfing and damning power? How? How? Our text gives, I believe, the one only true answer. That answer is: "Lift up Christ Crucified; Hold up Jesus; Plant the Cross in the way of all these perishing multitudes."

This, especially in our day, is what we, as ministers, must do. In order to reform society, in order to regenerate the World, in order to purify the Church, in order to reach and uplift and save souls, we must, in all our preaching, lift up Christ. Not ourselves, but Christ; not the Church, but Christ; not Forms and Ceremonies, but Christ; Christ, as the Incarnation of Deity, as the Revealer of the will of God, as the Great Teacher of Man, as the high Model of faultless character and of holy living, as the Divine Benefactor of the human race; and especially must we preach Christ as "lifted up," the Christ crucified, suf-

fering, bleeding, dying on the Cross as a Divine Sacrifice for man's sins, and as man's ransom from eternal death; this must be the chief burden and theme of all our preaching.

And this, also, will always be successful preaching. The pulpit that thus preaches Christ will always be a pulpit of power. Men will be arrested by it, convicted of sin by it, converted, sanctified, saved by it. Such a pulpit becomes the great regenerating and uplifting agency of society. It reforms and purifies the whole social life of the state. It is the salt, the life, the salvation of the world. It is the power of God unto salvation.

And not only is there power in the pulpit that thus lifts up Christ, but there is also abiding freshness and attractiveness in it. It has in it the element of permanent and increasing popularity. This preaching of Christ never grows stale or old. It is always the "old, old story," yet always new.

This, then, is the one duty of the pulpit: namely, always and only to preach Christ and Him crucified. Then only will it be a pulpit of real, living, permanent power. And then,

also, in the best and truest sense of the word, will it be an attractive pulpit, drawing men's souls to Christ, even as Jesus here says: "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

There is, however, here in our text, also,

A lesson of Encouragement for us, as Christians, as well as a lesson of Duty.

Often, under a conscious sense of our personal weakness and insufficiency, and want of talent, and lack of ability, we shrink even from the attempt to do anything for Christ, and for the salvation of souls. We ministers often feel thus; often with the Apostle exclaiming: "Who is sufficient for these things?" and often with the Prophet crying out: "Ah, Lord God, I cannot speak. I am a child." Oh, how often this sense of weakness, of inability for the great work before us has almost crushed us. And you, also, of the laity, members of the Church, how often doubtless you, too, have been thus burdened, feeling that you could do nothing by which souls would be saved. But why, now, should any of us feel or speak thus? Our ground of encouragement in Christian work is not in ourselves, but it is in

Christ. Jesus, here in our text, reveals to us a secret by which we can all have power to win souls, by which we may all be successful workers for Him. He here says to us: "The power to awaken, draw, convert, sanctify, and save the souls of men is not in you, but in Me. I, if I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto Me; not you, but I; if only I be lifted up, that is all you have to do, I will draw men to Myself and to Heaven; only so I be lifted up, preached, consistently lived, tenderly and lovingly spoken of, rightly presented to the world, no matter how feeble the hand that lifts Me up, or how stammering the tongue that speaks for Me, or how broken the voice that sings for Me; I, not you, by your eloquence, or learning, or talent, but I, wholly by the divine attractive power that, as the Son of God, is in Me, I will draw all men unto Me; I will do it all; all you have to do is to so hold or lift Me up that sinners may see Me."

Brethren and Friends, what a blessed secret that is! What encouragement to us all, even to the least talented, these words of the Master are! In the magnet, not in the hand that

holds it, is the attraction. In the candle, not in the candlestick in which it is placed, is the light. In the Brazen Serpent, not in the pole upholding it, was the healing power. And so the power to win and save souls is not in us, but in Christ. We cannot draw them, but He can. We cannot melt and change their hard, bad hearts, but He can. And, if only He be indeed by us rightly lifted up, He also, as He here promised, most certainly will.

Not long ago, a railroad bridge was suddenly washed away. The watchman's little daughter was the only one, for some reason, who, at the moment, knew what had occurred. A train was soon due. She saw the danger and death, which, unless warned, awaited it. And so, taking her dead father's red signal flag, and going up the road, she stood and waited until the train came in sight, and then, raising the flag, she waved it, checked the train, saved it. It was only a child's hand that held and waved that danger signal and saved that onrushing train. In herself alone, without that flag, she could have done nothing. Planting herself before that train, her little

body could not have stayed it. Her feeble voice could not have called it to a halt. The power was in the flag, symbol of danger, which her childish hand there so nobly held up.

And so, beloved, the power to save men is not, I repeat, in us. The strongest of us, the wisest, the holiest are, in ourselves, but little children, unable to save one single soul. But the power is all in Christ. He saves them. And we can be instruments by which He will save them. We can show sinners the Cross. We can tell them of Jesus. We can be uplifters of this Son of God as the lost World's one only Redeemer. This we all can do. This we all ought to do.

Make this, then, your one grand life-work, my brother. Be ever, in every possible way, an uplifter of Christ. By your faith in Him, by your confession of Him, by your life for Him, by your worship of Him, by your labor and giving and sacrifice for Him, manifest Christ; ever remembering what He says in our text: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."

THE STRENGTH OF YOUNG MEN.

TEXT.

"I have written unto you young men, because ye are strong."—1 John ii. 14.

One of the marked characteristics of all young life is Strength. There is still in it the unexpended force or energy of its own fulness and freshness of being. It has as yet lost nothing of itself in conflict with the other forms of life outside of itself and opposed possibly to itself. It is life, also, untouched as yet by the breath of decay, by the frost of age, by the law of decline, by the force within itself of dissolution and death. It is *young* life, fresh from God, who is the Infinite Fountain of Life; and, because thus young and fresh from God, it is also robust, healthful, strong life. Because of its very *newness* of being it has in it the quality of strength.

This is true of all vegetable life. It is true of all irrational animal life. It is especially true of all human life. Man has his fullest vigor, energy, force of being, in his first man-

hood years. Not in all respects, by any means, has he then his best strength, but he then has strength, inherent strength, potential strength, strength as yet undisciplined, and perhaps unharnessed and undirected as yet to any one great purpose or end in life, but, nevertheless, strength.

Pre-eminently strength is the characteristic of every young man. He is, in many respects, already strong. Especially has he in himself the potencies of strength: possibilities of strength, germs of power, enlarging capacities of great future achievements, a latent force of being which, both in time and in eternity, will either lift him up into ever higher planes of Life and Light and holy Fellowship with God, or will sink him, like a falling star, down into ever deepening lower depths of moral darkness and death.

In what respects is the young man strong? In what centers his strength? Samson's strength was in his hair. The strength of Hercules was in his brawny muscle and mighty arm. The strength of Mercury was in his eloquence. In what is every young

man strong? Where lies his strength? In a number of things.

There is, in connection with every young man, I remark,

I. The strength of joyous hope and of bright expectation by parents and friends.

No words can well express how strong every young man is in his mother's love, and in his father's hopes and ambitions. There is no affection like the affection of a Parent; no devotion or attachment so deep, so fervent, so enduring, so quenchless. Time does not weaken it. Distance does not diminish it. It lives on in the parental heart as long as that heart continues to beat on earth; and when Death at last stills it here, it lives on forever in it in the life to come. The most immortal thing on earth or in heaven, next to the love of God Himself, is the love of father or mother for a child.

Here, then, in the love of his parents, in their willing sacrifices for him, in their pride in him, in their expectations and hopes concerning him, every young man is strong.

Those hearts he has it in his power either to fill with gladness or to break with sorrow; either to send singing and happy along life's pathway and make joyous even in death, or compel to walk life's journey in tears, and go, at last, in sadness to their graves, exclaiming as did David over Absalom: "O my son, my son, would God I had died for thee!" It is the strength of Love: the Love of a father, the holy deathless Love of a mother; placing itself in the power of the child, and saying: "Love makes me your prisoner; my life is in your determining; yours is the voice which decides for me either my happiness or my misery; my joy or my sorrow." Blessed is the young man who recognizes this strength over Parental Destiny which Parental Love thus gives him, and who nobly resolves never to use that strength in wounding and breaking a father's or a mother's heart, but to so expend it as ever to make life to them an unbroken psalm of praise, and cause them, even down to its close, and even through all eternity, to bless God for the gift to them of such a Son.

But every young man is strong in himself. In his own being, as well as in the love for him of others, he is power. There is, I therefore yet remark:

II. The strength of splendid endowments and magnificent possibilities in every young man.

What fine endowments God has given in a fully and symmetrically developed young man! What lofty gifts such a young man possesses!

He possesses physical strength; and that is a blessed gift. A strong physique is a choice possession. A clean, pure, healthy, and well developed body is something of great value, worthy to be sought after. It is the workmanship of God. It is the temple of the soul. It is the instrument by which the spirit puts forth its energies and achieves its purposes. Honor, therefore, as a young man, your body. By fresh air, the use of simple and nutritious food, manly exercise, an abundance of sleep, abstinence from all harmful vices, develop it into best possible perfection. By athletic games and steady and wise gymnastic practice

secure for yourself, as you can thus do, a strong physical manhood.

But intellectual strength is also an endowment of the ideal young man. Athanasius was but a young man when, in the Great Council of Nice, he stood forth as the able and eloquent defender of the Deity of Christ. John Calvin was but a young man when he wrote his immortal "Theological Institutes," a work which, however men may differ in their respective views of its doctrines, must be confessed to be one of the most masterly productions that has ever been penned. Luther, also, was but a young man, only thirty-four, when, by nailing up his ninety-five theses, he struck his first great open blow against the errors of Rome.

And so in the history of the World, as well as of the Church, young men have generally been the Chief and Prominent Actors.

Washington was not yet thirty-three when he took command of the Continental Army. Alexander Hamilton was only thirty-three when he became Federal Treasurer, and, as Webster said, "smote the corpse of public

credit, and it rose upon its feet." John Jay was only thirty-one when he took his seat as President of the First Continental Congress. James Madison was only thirty-six when he wrote his famous papers in the "Federalist." William H. Seward was already a profound thinker, philosopher, lawyer, and was already in the State Senate at thirty-two. Alexander had already conquered the world at thirty-three. Cicero was famous as an orator already at twenty-six. Napoleon was already Emperor before he was thirty-four. Pitt was Prime Minister before he was thirty-four.

And so in multitudes of other cases. In both Church and State, all along in the World's History, it is young men who have, in large measure, been the great leaders of thought, and of the great historic activities of the human race, and who have moulded and determined the character and destiny both of their own age and of the ages following. They were then already, as young men, strong, either as a blessing or as a curse both to themselves and to thousands and even millions of others. Intellectual power, as well as physical,

generally decays with advancing years. Men of great intellectual strength, like John Quincy Adams, like Bismarck, like Gladstone, at seventy and eighty years of age, are, in this respect, exceptional. The rule is that age brings with it enfeebled mental force. The Duke of Marlborough, for example, one of the greatest of the World's soldiers, is reported, in his last years, to have lost all memory of his own great exploits, and when, for his entertainment, the history of them was read to him, rising up he would enthusiastically ask: "Who commanded?" And so, also, Sir Isaac Newton, whose strength of intellect in his full manhood years was unequaled, in his last years was unable to understand the simplest principles of the great problems which he had once solved with greatest ease. And thus generally. In old age there is the waning of intellectual power, the abating of the mental strength of earlier years.

But young men are strong also in Spirit: in Heart and Hope, in Enthusiasm, in Self-Confidence and heroic Daring. The blood ever courses warm and swiftly through a young

man's veins, inciting him to difficult undertakings, and assuring him of success in it whatever may oppose. Not so with old men. They, on the contrary, taught by experience, remembering many past disappointments and surrounded by the wrecks of many shattered idols and blasted hopes, are timid and cautious, have lost spirit, are reluctant to make ventures. They lack the faith and hope of success which they once had, and which are always necessary in order to spur one on to brave and great endeavors. It is the young man who possesses these, who will dare anything, who, in his warm enthusiasm and assurance of success, will attempt the achievement of even things seemingly impossible, and who, because thus hopeful and daring, is strong, and accomplishes what he attempts, "I write unto you, young men, because ye are strong."

Such, now, hastily outlined, are the endowments of young men, and in these endowments is their strength. And hence, also their Possibilities. Clothed with such power, having such Strength, they are capable of great things. They are invested with magnificent

Possibilities: possibilities of usefulness, of honor, of happiness, of blessing, and possibilities also of fearful self-degradation, of shame, of harm to society, or injury to the Church and to the Cause of Christ, of moral ruin both to themselves and to others both in time and in eternity.

And right there centers the importance of every young man. It is that which awakens such deep interest in him on the part of all thoughtful and good people older than himself. Not so much because of what he yet is, but because of what he may, and necessarily will, either for evil or for good, become; parents, teachers, pastors, the State, the school, the Church all fix upon him their anxious thought and seek to guide him into those right pathways both of character and life which will make him a blessing to himself and to all with whom he has to do. In him is tremendous latent strength, a pent-up energy and force which is mighty. How shall that strength be expended? What moral direction in life shall that energy take? To what uses shall that force be applied? On yonder railway

track stands a locomotive. The fire is burning in its furnace. Its water is heated into steam. Power has been generated. Its every part is trembling with the mighty force which throbs within it. It has great possibilities within it. It may sweep on in safety to their distant homes the hundreds and thousands of passengers filling the train attached to it, or it may dash both itself and them over the precipice into ruin and death. Its power gives it mighty possibilities; but they are possibilities of death as well as of life. And so with every young man. He has power. He is strong. And because of his strength he has vast, weighty, far-reaching, important possibilities before him. Something will come from him. His life will tell in some direction. That power in him will expend itself in some way. The anxious question is: Where, how, in what way? For evil or for good? As a bane or as a blessing? For the Church or against her? For the benefit of Society or for its curse? For his own salvation in eternity, or for his eternal destruction? That is the question.

And this leads me to remark:

III. That to every young man there is, especially in this day, the strength of mighty perils and moral dangers.

Satan is working hard to gain young men. He, too, knows that they are strong. He sees the power there is in them, and he well knows that if he can gain them they will do him good service. And hence all his subtle, captivating, varied, persistent, mighty efforts to win them. What agents and agencies thus to gain them he has at work! What allurements and temptations! What deceptions and wiles! What appeals to taste, to imagination, to their love of the beautiful, to their hope of gain, to their pleasure in society, to their appetite and passion and lust! What an undermining of moral principles and of Christian faith. What assaults of doubt and scepticism. What temptations to aimlessness in life, to idleness, to extravagance, to untruthfulness, to dishonesty, to profanity, to intemperance, to lewdness, to vice of every kind! What perils, on every hand, from bad literature, bad company, bad

practices, bad places: from the liquor saloon, from the house of the strange woman, from the gaming table: from all these, and from many other places, what moral perils face and lure on to ruin our young men!

In the midst of such dangers a young man well needs to be strong. His foes also are strong. Like a very giant he needs to stand up in his integrity against them and heroically resist them. He dare not dally with them. He must not parley with them a moment. He must not yield to them an inch. His strength, and God's strength in him, must be uncompromisingly and unyieldingly set against them or he will go down before them. Many young men have, alas! thus yielded to temptation, have dallied with these enemies of their souls, have listened to the siren songs of sin, and have gone down. You can see them everywhere. Sad sight, indeed! A ruined young man! Ruined already in the morning of his life. The captive of Satan, the bondservant of vicious habits, manhood degraded, purity gone, character wrecked, reputation lost, awakened hopes blasted, possibilities of honor and

happiness and usefulness all thrown away, the man in body and soul a wreck, life here and hereafter lost. I know of no sadder sight! Even angels might well weep over it. And its deepest sadness comes from the fact of its commonness. It is such a frequent sight: We see it so often, and everywhere. Our land is full of young men who are thus going down before these moral perils which assail them. And many of them, alas! come from our Christian homes, and from the altars of our Christian Churches, and from our Christian Colleges, and go down before these forces of evil into ruin, even from the very clasp and hold upon them of our best Christian love.

Young men, you to whom I speak this evening, I beg you to recognize in their true character these perils to which you are exposed. Know these enemies who are thus seeking to rob you of your virtue, your manhood, your piety, your purity, your happiness, your life, and set yourself against them with all the might of your being. "Be not overcome of evil." But *stand.* Stand for your life, your life *here,* your *eternal* life, for he who surren-

ders to sin, he who breaks faith with God, he who is disloyal to Conscience and Truth and Christ, loses both.

But I advance to another thought. Has the young man, arrayed against him and seeking his destruction, the Strength of Mighty Perils and Moral Dangers, then has he, I now remark,

IV. The strength of mighty helpers and strong moral allies arrayed for him. "The reformation as the work of God."

I can but enumerate these helpers and allies which stand, like guardian angels, around every young man in the moral conflict of life. Their number is large; their power to help him, if he will avail himself of it, is great; so that we may say encouragingly to every young man, assailed by these moral foes which are seeking his ruin, as Elisha said to his affrighted servant: "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them."

The sweet memories of childhood are with them. The remembrance of the Old Home Life: of a father's prayers, of a mother's love,

of the family altar, of the old family Bible, of the Scripture lessons taught, of the moral principles inculcated, of the religious habits once practiced, of the worship of God once enjoyed: the remembrance of all these still lingers in the young man's soul, and, in temptation, helps him to be strong. The voice of Conscience is with him, and, in the midst of life's moral conflicts, rings out its words of warning and bids him bravely stand. His Reason and sober Judgment are with him and tell him not to allow his own undoing. His sense of self-respect is with him and pleads with him to scorn what would cost him his own self-degradation. His early habits of Christian living are with him and hold him to a continuance in well doing. His training and education are with him: the many high moral lessons of truthfulness and honesty and purity and righteousness and morality and godliness impressed upon him by parents and pastors and teachers, the many influences for good brought by them to bear upon him and to mould his character: all these still are with him. The interest in him of multitudes of loving friends, concerned

for his welfare, desirous for his success, rejoicing in his unsullied and unstained young manhood, pained if he should fall, following him with their friendship, giving him their confidence and love: all these, also, are with him. His own interest in himself, or consideration of his own best welfare: regard for his health, for his reputation, for the esteem of his fellow men, for his prosperity in business or trade, for his good standing in society, for his accumulation of wealth, for his promotion to places of honor and power and trust in the State or in the Church, for his fame both while living and when once removed by death, for his happiness here and his salvation hereafter: regard for his own best interests in all these respects is ever, if he is thoughtful of himself as he ought to be, with him inciting him to the right and checking and restraining him from the wrong. The Institutions of our holy Christian Religion are also with him: the Church, the Ministry, the Preached Word, the Sacraments, the Social Fellowship of Christian People, the Bible, the Christian Press, the Lord's Day, the Christian

Home, the Christian College or School: all these are helps and allies to the Young Man to strengthen his moral character, to confirm him in sound moral principle, to develop him in strong and noble Christian Manhood. And, finally, best of all God is with him: with him by His Providence to guard and guide him; with him by His Spirit to sanctify, comfort and strengthen him; with him by His Church to instruct, nourish, keep him; with him by His Son to redeem, pardon, bless and save him.

All these are allies of the young man in his warfare with his spiritual foes, in his resistance of temptation, in his battles against sin. He does not stand alone. A great host of spiritual warriors stand around him and fight for him. The combined power of all that is good both upon earth and in heaven is arrayed in his behalf. All the saintly in the Church below, all the redeemed in the Church above, all the sympathy of Christ who died for him, all the omnipotence and pity and love of God his Father who made and keeps him, all are on his side and are supporting and sustaining him.

With such allies in the fight is not the Christian Young Man strong? Was not the Apostle right in his estimate of such when he wrote: "I write unto you young men because ye are strong": strong in the strength of God, strong in the power of the Holy Ghost, strong in a moral might given from above and which makes them conquerors and more than conquerors through Him who loved them. But only such are strong. Only the young man who thus is strong in God's strength, is really strong, is strong enough to stand in the moral battle which he must wage. His own strength, unhelped by God's strength, is weakness. His will power, his best resolutions, his firmest purposes, will all prove unable to resist the shock of the conflict. Contending alone and in his own strength he will go down before his foes as the ship goes down before the storm. Hundreds and thousands, strong as any, have thus gone down. Alexander, proudly called "the Great," and who was also great as men esteem greatness, great in his exploits, in his success, in his achievements, in his intellect and will, in his mastery over men, in his military

genius, who with his mighty armies conquered the world, whom neither rapid rivers, nor rugged mountains, nor opposing nations, nor countless enemies, could discourage nor deter from his purpose nor overcome, this man, so great, who having conquered the world sighed for yet other worlds to conquer, in his own strength was yet unable to conquer himself and went down while yet a young man, the slave of his own passions, the helpless victim of his own bad habits. And thus many young men, today, strong in their own fancied strength, go down as moral wrecks into the whirlpool of destruction. I wish I could make every young man, who reads this, feel deeply this truth, namely, that he is strong morally only as God, by His grace, makes him strong. Divine strength is alone real strength; and is alone sufficient strength. As young men have that are they strong, and then only are they strong. Only when they have God as their Friend, and Christ as their Helper, and the Holy Ghost as Heart-guest, and the Church as their Spiritual Home, and the People of God as their Companions, and the Bible as their

Pilot and Compass, only then will they safely make the voyage of life here and enter, at last, in triumph "the harbor of eternal life on the other shore."

"I can be my own pilot," was recently the haughty answer of a young sea captain, when admonished that the coast was dangerous and that he should signal for a Pilot: "I can be my own pilot." He was his own Pilot. But the vessel struck the rock, and the next morning his dead body, and fragments of his queenly ship, and remnants of his costly freight were scattered in mockery, as it were, all along the surfy shore of the angry sea. He was his own Pilot. But there was his fatal mistake. It gratified, for a moment, his vanity, but, in the end, it cost him his life. Oh, young men, repeat not his folly. Seek not to be your own Pilots over the dangerous Sea of Life. It will cost you your soul. Take Christ as your Pilot. In prayer throw out, this moment, a signal of distress. Send a message to Heaven for help. Telegraph to the skies for a Pilot.

Young men, this is the strength you need. There are burdens to be borne through life,

our own and others'; there are enemies to overcome, passions to subdue, vices to uproot, virtues to implant, services to execute, work to do—and the natural man, with all his wonderful capacities and capabilities, does not possess the strength or power of endurance for such undertakings. Nevertheless, the old apostle in Patmos furnishes the secret: "Ye are strong, and *the Word of God Abideth in you*"—the Word of God; the written Word, bearing within itself Christ the Incarnate Word, who takes up His abode within us. In order, then, to possess strength, Christ must thus enter the heart and find lodgment within. There must be a willing surrender of the citadel of Man's soul to King Emanuel. Give Jesus, then, a thrice blessed welcome. Entertain this Divine Guest. He will become your Captain, and will lead you forth to victory.

When Robert Bruce lay dying he gave charge to the black Douglas to bury his heart in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The brave general, in obedience to the dying wishes of his king, carried in a silver casket hanging from his neck the embalmed heart of Bruce,

and with a few Scottish cavaliers set out for the Holy Land. They met with many impediments on their onward march, the Moors in Spain being especially antagonistic. On one occasion when the little band of Scotchmen beheld the numbers of the enemy they became demoralized and would have fled from the foe; but Douglas, taking from his bosom the precious relic, threw it at the enemy, and grasping his sword with renewed energy cried to the little band, "Scotchmen fight for the heart of Bruce!" The word thrilled his brave followers, who charged upon the Moors and drove them from the field, knowing that the heart which ever throbbed with affection for them was now in danger of being trampled under foot. Though inanimate that heart, it recalled heroic deeds of the great Bruce which filled them with frenzy, inflamed them with renewed zeal until strengthened they went forth to victory. Soldiers of Christ, your inspiration is far higher, nobler, and more effective. For not the embalmed heart of our glorious Leader have we in the field, but His living presence. Hear Him declare, "Lo, I am with you alway!"

Let that ringing word rally all around His banner, and giving the enemy no quarter, entering into no compromise with the foe, "fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life," and win for yourselves the blessed plaudit, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord," for "the joy of the Lord is your strength."

Unsaved, ungodly, Christless young man, one word more to you. Remember that "when we were yet without strength Christ died for the ungodly." But God raised Him from the dead, and through Him now is preached unto you forgiveness of sins, and everlasting life. Yield your life to Him who is your best Friend, then shall you be strong in battling for the Lord.

THE RESURRECTION BODY.

TEXT.

"But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?"—1 Corinthians xv. 35.

Our text is a question. It is not necessarily the question of a Sceptic or doubter. It may be the question of honest search after light and after clearer understanding of the doctrine in connection with which the question is asked.

The Apostle, by a most masterly argument, had established the great truth of the Resurrection of the Body. The logic he employs in his argument is convincing; the conclusion is irresistible, and the fact is proven beyond room for rational doubt. The dead shall all again be restored to life, and shall all again rise. There will be a Resurrection of the Bodies of the dead.

But, whilst thus convinced, by irresistible argument, of the fact that the dead shall again rise, the manner of their resurrection is still

an unsettled question. How will they be raised up? With what kind of bodies will they, in the Resurrection Morning, come forth? Will the body that rises from the grave be the same body that was laid in the grave? In what respects will our present bodies and our future, or resurrection, bodies be alike? In what respects will they differ? If the same, in what will consist their identity? What will be the character of our future or resurrection body contrasted with the character of our present body? What precisely will be the relation of the one to the other? Admitting the fact of the resurrection of the dead, how will they arise? "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what kind of body do they come?"

We would first maintain THAT THE SAINTED DEAD, IN THE MORNING OF THE RESURRECTION, WILL NOT COME IN A BODY WHICH IS LITERALLY AND ABSOLUTELY, IN ALL ITS MATERIAL PARTICLES, PRECISELY THE SAME AS THAT WHICH IN BURIAL WAS LAID AWAY IN THE GRAVE.

It is evidently erroneous to hold, as some do, that the future or resurrection body shall be composed of precisely the same matter, and in precisely the same quantities and same proportions, as compose the Christian's present body. Such a literal or material theory of the Resurrection is, I say, evidently erroneous and untenable. The resurrection body, in its material composition, will, most evidently, not be precisely the same as the present body, that is, the same matter exactly, and no other. For, in opposition to such a theory as this, the Scriptures expressly declare that "flesh and blood" shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. Besides, Science, also, well asks: "How can possibly the body ever be thus literally raised us?" It tells us that in a man's life-time the matter composing his body is so constantly changing that every seven years he has a new body; and, hence, pointing to a man who has lived to be seventy years old, it asks, with a sneer, whether the matter that composed this or that one of the ten bodies which were each successively here his, will there and then constitute his resurrection body? Or, it points us

to bodies that have been consumed by fire, and their ashes scattered by the winds of heaven over the face of the earth; and to others that have been eaten by wild beasts and, as food, have helped to constitute their bodies, or been eaten by cannibals and have been assimilated and entered into the composition of other human bodies; and to still others that have been dissolved on battle fields and enriched the soil, and been absorbed by the roots of trees and grasses and harvests of corn and wheat, and have been changed into fruit or grain, which were eaten by man or beast, and thus passes into other animal systems and, as muscle or bone or blood, become part again of some other living organization; science, I say, honest, thoughtful inquiry upon this subject, points to all these facts involving considerations concerning the matter which now composes our bodies and it well asks: How can, in view of these facts, there ever be such a thing as a Resurrection of the very same body which is laid in the grave? How can just precisely the matter which now constitutes my body also constitute my resurrection body, when that

matter before it composed my body was possibly part of some other human body, and after I have laid it aside, and it is dissolved into air and gases and water and soil, and changed into some other form, it may enter into the structure of a dozen or a hundred other human bodies?

And those are hard questions to answer. You may, I know, answer them by simply saying to the Objector: "With God all things are possible. He could create the body and He also can re-create it. He can re-collect the scattered particles, and can re-organize them, and can re-construct the body again of the same particles precisely of which it is now composed. Let them be where they will, at His bidding they can all be summoned back again, and can be made to compose the same form exactly which they once composed when the body was laid in the grave." "Yes," I answer, "that is, I suppose, all true. God has all power." But in this case it is not a question of mere Divine Power: it is a question simply of fact. God can do all that He wills to do, and all that He has said He will do. And, hence, if God

anywhere in His word had said that in the Morning of the Resurrection He would raise up from the grave the same body precisely which had been laid away in the grave, that is composed of the very same particles which now compose it, He also could do it, and most surely would also do it. And then, if thus declared in the word of God, no matter how many objections might by human science or philosophy be made to it, or how many difficulties and seeming impossibilities might be advanced against it, I would still most firmly believe it, and we all would. For God's word is always truth.

But happily God's Word makes no such tax upon our faith as all that. God's Word nowhere teaches that our Resurrection Bodies will thus be composed of the same precise matter which now composes our bodies, or which will compose them when at our death they are laid away in the grave. Paul, indeed, in answer to this question of our text, "With what body do they come?" most positively asserts just the reverse. To the Objector, who asks the question, and who assumes that if the

dead, as Paul taught, really do again rise, then they must also rise in the very same materially composed bodies which they here inhabited, and which were here buried, says: "Thou fool! That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat or of some other grain." That is: "There is a difference between the seed sown and the living plant that springs from that seed. You drop into the earth, he means, a grain, and there comes up, not a grain, but a green, living stalk or tree; and whilst the stalk or tree has, indeed, sprung from the grain which you planted or sowed, there is yet not a particle of that grain now in the stalk or tree. The matter in the stalk or tree is all matter which, as a living organism, it has, through its roots and leaves, or lungs, absorbed and assimilated into its own being from the soil and air and water around it; and the seed from which it sprung was simply the germ or source of its life. The seed sown had in itself a hidden and indestructible life-force, capable of assimi-

lating new matter and of clothing itself with a new and more beautiful vegetable body —that is, it dissolved and died, and in its dissolution and death, or rather by its dissolution and death, this life-force was set at liberty, and sprung into activity, and ushered into being a new and higher form of life.

"And so," is the Apostle's meaning, "it will also be with the Resurrection Body. It will not be the bare grain merely of the body that was sown or buried that will come up, but it will be the new and higher organism of a glorified body. It will be a body sprung from the old, yet not the old; a body the same in its identity, yet not the same in its composition, or in its component material quality."

This, then, is now the first answer to the question of our text: "With what body do they come?" namely, They come, or they will arise, not in bodies composed of precisely the same matter, and in the same organism, as now constitute or characterize our present bodies, or as compose the body when, at the close of our earth-life, it is laid in its last sleep in the grave. But,

II. WHILST THE RESURRECTION BODY OF THE SAINTS WILL THUS NOT BE, LITERALLY AND MATERIALLY, JUST PRECISELY THE SAME AS THEIR PRESENT BODY, THERE WILL STILL BE SUCH AN ORGANIC AND VITAL CONNECTION BETWEEN THE TWO THAT THE FUTURE OR RESURRECTION BODY WILL RETAIN AND PERPETUATE THE IDENTITY OF THE PRESENT BODY.

This the Apostle here clearly teaches by his figure of the seed and that which springs from the seed. The new stalk is not, it is true, in substance the old seed; and yet there is, as all can see, a vital connection between the stalk and the seed. It is the same species. It produces again the same kind of seed, and not another kind. The one owes its being to the other, and is really the perpetuation of the same life that was in the other; so that however unlike in form and appearance the seed and the stalk that grows from it may be, there is still "identity," identity of species and order, identity of inward being and onward flow of life.

And just so there exists "identity" between

the Resurrection Body and the present body that is laid in the grave. Our present body is the "grain." The Resurrection body is the "stalk" that by divine power is made to grow up out of this grain. The grain dies, but there is in that dying grain an invisible and an indestructible germ of life or of life-force, which in the Morning of the Resurrection, at God's bidding, will assume to itself new form —that is, the form of its future or resurrection body, just as the seed, in dying, gives up its old form of a seed and develops into the new form of a plant, and then, in that new form, it will perpetuate the life which it lived here, in its present form. Thus is there connection, and thus also is there living and unbroken identity between our present and our future bodies. They are different, yet they are identical; different in appearance, in perfection, in glory, yet identical as the unbroken onward flow of the same individual existence or personality. "There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for one star differeth from another star in glory;" "and so," the Apostle

means to say, "there can and will be a great difference not simply between Resurrection bodies in general, but also in each individual case, between the old body and the new, and yet their identity remains. "So," is his language, "is the Resurrection of the dead."

Besides, do we not find analogies of this very thing, of this preservation, I mean, of identity amid change and transformation in the insect and animal creation all around us? Look at the moth, the caterpillar, the locust. In the case of each, when a transition from one mode of life to another is to take place, the germs or the embryo organism of the future or coming being are wrapped up in the organization of the present being, so that whilst in the transition something of the old is left behind, and much is gained in the new, yet the identity of the being remains unbroken through every stage of the transformation.

And so with us. The germ of our future Resurrection body is, in some mysterious way wrapped up and hid away in our present body, as the body of the oak is hid away in the acorn, or the body of the butterfly is hid away in the

caterpillar, or the body of the stalk is hid away in the seed or grain, or the beauty and fragrance of the flower is hid away in the root or bulb. The one gives being to the other. The life in the one, after sleeping in the grave, awakes and perpetuates itself in the other.

But the question may here be asked: If the Resurrection body is so different from the present body, if it only comes up from the present body and yet is not fully the present body itself, how, then, will we ourselves, or how will others, be able to recognize the Resurrection body as being, indeed, the same body that we here inhabited? How will we assuredly know and feel that the body into which my soul shall then enter, is, indeed, my old body? Will it not possibly be so entirely different that it will virtually be to me an entirely new and strange body?

To this question I answer: No. How the consciousness of bodily identity will be secured, I do not know. But my body then will most clearly be seen to be the same body which is my body now. Of this God's Word

assures me. Paul, here in the context, says: "God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body." The implied argument of which is that in some sense the same body which we had before we shall have then. To each one will be given "his own body." There will be identity. It will be his own body.

And hence, also, our Saviour, after His Resurrection, appeared to the disciples in a "form" or "body" which, whilst glorified and greatly changed, yet presented so fully the same outward appearance as that in which He had dwelt among them before His death that they were enabled to recognize Him, and to be assured that it was really He with whom they had before, as Master and disciples, been associated.

Our Resurrection body then, whatever it may in itself exactly be, and however different from and superior to our present body it undoubtedly then will be, will yet in some way be identical with our present body, and will so far retain the appearance and individuality of our present body that in that future

Resurrection body we will easily be recognized by those who knew us, and will be known as the same distinct personalities which we are now known to be in our present body.

But, if now we inquire yet more closely into the exact Character of the Resurrection body and seek to give, if possible, a still more definite answer to the question of the text: With what body do they come? then we have only to notice yet more carefully:

III. The apostolic description here in the context of what our resurrection body shall be.

Two things concerning it he states very emphatically. He tells us:

(a.) That it will be such a body as it may please God in the Resurrection to give us. "God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him."

Nowhere around us can we discover such a thing as naked life. It is always incorporate or embodied life. And He who has thus given body to life is God. The form of the human body for the habitation of the human life, the

form of irrational animals for mere animal life, and of insects for insect life, and of plants for plant life, all these are His materialized conceptions or creations. To each of these special kinds of life He has given a body as it hath pleased Him, and as the special life in each required. And so, also, in the Resurrection, the Apostle assures us, God will give to each of us a Resurrection body as will please Him—that is, such a body as He in His infinite wisdom and benevolence will choose for us as suited to the new, celestial and glorious heavenly life to which we shall then be exalted. "God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him." A body so beautiful, so radiant, so perfect, so capable, so glorious, so immortal, and so adapted to be the home of the redeemed immortal soul, that it will please Him, and that He can again, as at first, in Eden, in strictest truth, pronounce it "good."

But in answer to the question: "With what body do they come?" the Apostle presents also,

(b.) Some points of contrast between the Resurrection bodies which we shall then have

and our present bodies, and he shows that our Resurrection bodies will be infinitely superior in every possible respect to our present bodies.

Our present body, he notices first, "is sown in corruption;" but our future body, he declares, "shall be raised in incorruption." "Sown in corruption." How true! The "Corruption" begins with the very beginning of our bodily life. Paul says, "I die daily." What toil, what care, what sickness, what suffering, what infirmities, what decay, what dissolution finally in the tomb, make up the experience here of the body! But how different it will be with the Resurrection body! The Apostle says: "It shall be raised in incorruption." Every sign or tendency to imperfection will then be forever gone. No pain, no sickness, no death. Elasticity in every limb, health on every cheek, joy in every eye.

"No chilling winds, nor poisonous breath,
Can reach that happy shore;
Sickness, and sorrow, pain and death,
Are felt and feared no more."

Blessed Hope! Death, with all its sad and painful preliminaries, shall then be known no

more. Glorified the body shall then stand forth in the glow and bloom and beauty of eternal youth. We shall all then, as disciples of Christ, be changed. This corruptible will then put on incorruption; and this mortal, or this present death-tendency in us, will then put on immortality. "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?"

Again, however, in his exhibit of this contrast between our present and future bodies, the Apostle says, concerning the present body: "It is sown in dishonor," but concerning the future body, "it is raised in glory." It goes down to the grave dishonored: dishonored by the touch and blight of sin; dishonored by all the destroying consequences of sin; a prey to the spoiler Death. But "it shall be raised in glory." "Jesus shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body."

What a contrast! What a comfort! All the imperfections and blemishes and defects of the present body gone. All the curse of the fall which has fallen on the body eternally lifted. And, instead of all these, there will then in our bodies be the beauty, the faultlessness, the perfection, the symmetry, the sun-like radiance and effulgence, the glory even of the body of the Saviour Himself as it once appeared on "the Mount of Transfiguration," or as it even now appears seated upon the Throne of Heavenly Royalty. "For we shall be like Him."

But more. The Apostle also further says, concerning our present body, "It is sown in weakness;" but concerning the future body he says, "it is raised in power." It goes down steadily already in weakness, as the years go by, under the burdens and sicknesses and struggles of life; and goes down, at last, in utter weakness into the grave, conquered by death. But how gloriously it is raised. "It is raised," says the Apostle, "in power:" in power over Death; in power over sin; in power over all the Christian's Spiritual Foes; in

power over all Physical Weariness; in power to pass on errands of God from world to world; in power without cessation to live, and labor, and love, and worship forever around the throne of God.

But, once more, concerning our present body he says: "It is sown a natural body"—that is, an animal, an earthly body, adapted to material surroundings, itself material, and needing material food to sustain it; but it shall, he declares, "be raised a spiritual body"—that is, a body which will consist of the most refined and purified substance; "matter," but transparent-etherealized matter; "matter," but matter spiritualized in its character; "matter," but matter approaching the nature of spirit; "matter," but matter sublimated and elevated above the laws and conditions which now govern our material bodies. "It is raised a spiritual body:" a body, but a body of spirit or a body resembling spirit. Amazing paradox! I speak, I know, of a great "mystery." I do not understand it. But I speak a great and most precious revealed fact. Our future Resurrection bodies shall be glorious, Spirit-

ual Bodies, infinitely superior in all respects to our present bodies, incorruptible instead of corruptible, perfect instead of imperfect, strong instead of weak, immortal instead of mortal, spiritual instead of material, glorious like Christ's own body, instead of inglorious and dishonorable as now under the ruin of sin and the law of Death.

Disciples of Christ, great is the bodily exaltation that awaits you. Surely, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." Not our Spirits only, but also our Bodies shall be gloriously redeemed from sin. These poor, suffering bodies of ours, shall also through the redemptive power of our Divine Lord, be perfectly delivered and glorified.

Let this be our Comfort. Let this be our hope. Body, soul and spirit, our whole being, will be glorified in the Day of His Coming. Rejoice in this blessed truth when you go to your grave, and rejoice in it for all your loved ones who now sleep there in Jesus.

THE CHARACTER OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

A Synodical Communion Sermon.

TEXT.

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"—1 Corinthians x. 16.

The Apostle, in this language of our text, presents to our attention the Nature of the Lord's Supper, declaring it to be a "Communion": a communion or a partaking in the bread which we eat, and in the wine which we drink, "of the Body and of the Blood of Christ."

This, of course, is a great "mystery." We know not how it can be. The Scriptures do not tell us how Christ is present in this Holy Sacrament. Here and elsewhere they simply state the fact of this Real Presence of Christ in the Supper. The mode or manner of it they do not state. That fact, therefore, whether we can understand it or not, we must either

accept by faith on the statement of it in God's word, or, because we cannot understand it, assume the responsibility to deny and reject it.

This Holy Supper is the "Farewell Sacrament" of our Ascended Saviour: His almost last act before His Passion and Death as a Sacrifice for our Sins. Its institution occurred under the most tender and solemn possible circumstances. The Saviour's life-work, upon earth, was almost finished; His ministry of teaching and of revelation to man of the will and purposes of God was fast drawing to a close; and His feet were trembling, as it were, upon the threshold of the door opening out before Him to Gethsemane and to Calvary. Only a few hours more, and He would be in the hands of His enemies; and, as man's Substitute, He would be enduring the curse of the broken divine law, and would be drinking the bitter cup of divine wrath for human guilt.

Under such circumstances, and in that solemn hour, gathering His disciples around Him, He instituted this Blessed "Sacrament." The

holy Evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke; together with the holy Apostle, St. Paul, all note this feature of the specially solemn time and tender circumstances of its institution; as if desirous thus to emphasize its sacredness, and to impress us with its preciousness and tenderness, and all of them using the same language, saying: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the night in which He was betrayed," as His farewell act, and as His last act of love before going to the cross, "took bread, and when He had given thanks He brake it, and gave it unto His disciples, saying: Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you: Do this in remembrance of me. Likewise, after the Supper, He took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying: Drink ye all of this; this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins: Do this, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me."

This Sacrament was instituted, we are therefore here taught, as a Commemorative Ordinance, as a Memorial Sacrament. Jesus wished to be remembered by His disciples.

He did not want to be forgotten by them when once out of their sight. "Do this," He says, "in remembrance of me"; meaning by these words: "I am about to be withdrawn in visible bodily form from you; you will see and hear me no more: the old relation which has subsisted between us in the flesh is now about to be terminated; but when I am gone, I do not want to be forgotten, I want you still to think of me, to bear me tenderly and lovingly in your mind and heart, to remember what I was to you while I was here with you; what I have spoken to you; how I love you; how I even at last died for you upon the cross. In a word, this command: "Do this in remembrance of me," was a tender appeal to His disciples to be cherished in their memory when once, after His death and ascension, He would visibly be no longer with them.

There is a revelation in all this of the true humanity of Christ. For how genuinely human is this desire to be remembered by our friends when once we are gone!

And, in compliance with His wish, Christ, in this Sacrament, has also been remembered.

This Sacrament, thus instituted "in the night of His betrayal" by our Saviour, in order that He might be remembered, has been sacredly observed by the Church, in obedience to her Lord's command, in all ages and lands, ever since. Doctrinal differences concerning it, almost without number, have marked, and alas! have also divided the Church in all her history; and the followers of Christ, even now yet, see not "eye to eye" with regard to its content or essential nature. But, to all, it is still a precious "Sacrament," and is observed, with rare exceptions, by all who profess His name, in obedience to the command of their one common Lord. In her past history the Church has been driven by the cruel hand of persecution out into the wilderness, and has been compelled to hide herself in dens and caves of the earth, in catacomb and forest and field; has been homeless ,and shelterless; has been without sanctuary or altar; and yet always even in her darkest days has she heeded this command of her dying Lord, and, in her use of this holy Sacrament has honored Him

as her Saviour, and has fed upon Him as her living bread.

And thus she is today still doing. In Protestant, in Greek, and in Roman Catholic branches of the Christian Church, on continent and island of the sea, in Gospel and in heathen lands, wherever Christ anywhere has those that love and fear Him, there also, in some form, and with some approach of fidelity to its right apprehension and use, seeking her Lord in it, and striving by its observance to honor Him, the Church, today, as ever since the night of its institution, observes this Sacrament of the Altar.

And thus, also, will she observe it to the very end of time. For always will Christ have a church in the world, and always, until time shall be no more, will that Church also honor her Lord by the use of His parting sacrament; as the Apostle teaches, when he says, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come."

And may it not be that even in the life eternal, in the Church redeemed and triumph

ant above, when once the saints of all ages, and of all lands, shall be gathered into the one General Assembly and Church of the First Born on high, may it not be that even there and then it still will, in some form, be eternally observed? Most probably it will be. As a remembrance of Calvary, as an eternal medium of Communion with Christ, and of feasting upon Him, even in His immediate and glorified presence, it is probable that this Holy Sacrament will still be observed. "Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until that day that I drink it new in the Kingdom of God." "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters." How inspiring the thought.

In its moral and spiritual influences and benefits this Holy Sacrament is incalculably precious. It is a full rich "channel of grace" to the believing soul; a divinely established medium in which Christ Himself is received as

a savor of life unto life by all those who come, in true spiritual worthiness, to it.

I. There is no other ordinance which brings so vividly before us, as does this, the great central fact of our Saviour's atoning death for us upon Calvary. Regarding it still as a merely commemorative ordinance, it points us back to Golgotha; reveals to us the Cross; tells us of atonement, of vicariousness, of substitution; speaks to us of Christ, the innocent One, dying for us, the guilty ones; pictures to us our redemption, not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Using the Apostle's language, we may say that Christ, in this Sacrament, is evidently set forth, crucified before us. The broken bread speaks to us of his broken body. The cup, with its crimson contents, tells us of His Blood: "the blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

All this is, indeed, most precious truth; the very core and heart of the Gospel; so that every time we come to the Lord's Table we come also, as it were anew to our Lord's Cross.

And we all, in this day, need as Christians, to emphasize to our faith this old Gospel fact. Much of our modern theology is tainted with unsoundness of this vital fact. "The Cross," now, as of old, is to many an "offence." With many there is but a feeble apprehension of human sinfulness, of man's guilt before God as a sinner, and of his need of a Saviour; and hence, there is also a corresponding tendency to lower, and even to ignore entirely, the atoning nature of the death of Christ; to spurn what they scornfully call "blood theology," as the true solution of the mystery of that Death.

But, reject it who will, it still remains true, and will abide eternally true, that we are saved "by the Blood"; that the "cross" is the fountain of our salvation; that Christ, by His death in our stead, and as a Sacrifice for our sins, saved us from death; in a word, that the "Atonement" is a precious central fact: the pivotal fact in the whole amazing divine scheme of human redemption. "Having made peace," says the Apostle, "through the Blood of His Cross." "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, He entered in

once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us;" "And they sung a new song, saying: Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue and people, and nation."

Hold fast, then, my brethren, as the central fact of redemption, to the atoning character of the death of Christ. Regard it, now and always, as a most precious divine verity. Emphasize the Cross. Make much of the Blood of Christ. Keep on singing, as from childhood you have sung:

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains."

This law or principle of Vicariousness exists, indeed, everywhere under God's moral and providential Government. The most common experience in common life is vicarious pain. In the home, society, the state, we continually see one person bearing the suffering due to

another. Luthardt says, "Love is, in its nature, substitutionary." Parents bear their children's burdens; one friend takes another's pain.

It is sometimes said that vicarious suffering is not just or equitable. Objection is made that the "innocent cannot in fairness, bear the punishment of the guilty." True, if the sufferer receives no adequate compensation. But Christ was rewarded. "He saw of the travail of His soul and was satisfied." True, if there was unwillingness on the part of either party to the transaction. But there is none here. Christ is willing to suffer; God is willing that Christ should suffer; and if, now, the sinner is willing that God should save him through the suffering of Christ, who shall offer objection?

It is also said that this view of the atonement encourages a continuance in sin. Just the reverse is true. Paul answers that objection in Romans vi. 1-4.

Believe it, then, and rest your trust for salvation solidly on it. Let it be a blessed reality in the grasp of your faith here, to-day. The design of this Holy Supper is to give it such

reality to your faith, and to make the death of your Saviour as a High-Priestly and Sacrificial act stand out before the vision of your soul in all possible clearness, and fulness, and joy.

II. This blessed Sacrament is, however, to us as believers and disciples of Christ, infinitely more than merely thus commemorative of His death. It communicates, as well as commemorates. It brings to us a present Christ, with all the treasures of His saving grace, as well as reminds us of the historic Christ that once was: the Christ who once in the past lived, and then died for us upon the Cross. It presents to us a Saviour living now, actually now present with us in this Holy Sacrament, giving Himself to us now, as once upon Calvary, eighteen hundred years ago, He gave Himself for us.

The blessings which Christ here, in this Holy Sacrament, in and with Himself, bestows upon us, as His believing disciples, are both many and precious. He here brings us indeed into His banqueting chamber and His banner over us is "Love."

Here at our Saviour's Table, we, as Christians, have, first of all, the blessed assurance and joy of the full pardon of all our sins.

"Calvary" was, as we have seen, an atonement for sin. Whose? "Mine," says the believer, as he stands at the Table of his crucified Lord, "Mine." He here hears the Saviour say to him: "Take, eat, this is My body which is broken for you." "This cup is the New Testament in My blood which is shed for you." "For you." "For me?" cries the believer. "Yes," says the Divine Word, "for you." "Thank God," his faith now exclaims, "it was for me." "He loved me and gave Himself for me; my Lord and my God; O Christ, I accept the work which Thou didst there thus accomplish for me, and which the Holy Ghost now in the Word, offers to me; trusting that word, word sure as God Himself, word divine which can never be broken, I know I am pardoned, justified, saved."

"My soul looks back to see
The burden Thou didst bear
When hanging on the cursed tree,
And knows her guilt was there."

And thus, by simple faith in the Word of Christ, spoken in the institution of this Holy Sacrament, the believing communicant has the assurance and joy as he partakes of it that he is, indeed, a pardoned and saved sinner.

But, here at the Lord's Table, we have, also, as Christians, not only the deepest apprehensions of the greatness of Christ's love for us, but also the warmest quickening of our love to Him.

At no other time does the infinite largeness of the love of Christ for us sinners so impress us as here at His Table. How eloquent of divine love this holy ordinance is! How touchingly it shows us, as it were, the very heart of God! That death of Christ on Calvary, which the Lord's Supper exhibits, was, indeed, the highest possible expression of the infinite love. So the Scriptures always express it. "God so loved the world that He gave His Only-Begotten Son." Christ, "having loved His own, which were in the world, loved them even unto the end." "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend, but God commendeth His love

toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Thus was infinite, unmerited, divine love the inspiration of that death on Calvary of Christ Jesus for us. And now that "love" this "Holy Supper," as in a picture or object lesson, reveals before us. Faith sees it. And as it is thus looked at by faith through these broken emblems the Holy Spirit whispers to the soul of the believer: "It was thee whom He thus loved unto death; it was for thy salvation that He thus bowed Himself in the bitterness of all that dreadful agony:

For love of thee He bled,
And all in torture died;
'Twas love for thee that bowed His head,
And oped his gushing side.

And this revelation to us in the Lord's Supper of Christ's love for us, serves, also to quicken our love to Him. Made, in this blessed ordinance, to realize the greatness of Christ's love for us, we also, as we stand at the Lord's Table, are in return quickened in our love for Him. Here, more than any where else, we are made to love Him, because here we

are made to see and feel as nowhere else, how much He loved us. The love of Christ here constraineth us. The sight, by faith, of the Cross of our Saviour, the witnessing thus of His great Love for us, and of all which, moved by love, He suffered for us and purchased for us, melts our hard hearts, starts tears of grateful love to our eyes, and draws us in reciprocal love to Him as our Infinite Benefactor. And, moved by this quickened love, we fall in holy adoration before Him, and, in our hearts, cry out to Him: "I love Thee, I love Thee, O Christ. Thy love has won me. I cannot but love Thee.

"Yes! Thou shalt always have my heart,
My soul, my strength, my all;
With life itself I'll freely part,
My Jesus, at Thy call."

But this Holy Sacrament is precious also to us because there is no time when, as believers in Christ, our love for each other is so quickened, and when our hearts are so melted into fervent and fraternal unity.

Here, at the Lord's Table, we are made to

realize, as nowhere else, that we are brethren. In the holy presence of our common Lord, in this Communion, all strife is hushed, all wrongs forgiven, all enmities melted into love in the light and warmth of the love of Christ, Him Who is the Great Reconciler of us all to all alienations reconciled in the presence of God.

It is said of Bishop Warburton, of England, that in giving the cup, on one occasion, to a communicant who had been his life-long enemy, he tenderly bent over him and said: "Dear brother, let this cup to-day be the cup of mutual love and reconciliation between us." So it has often been between those who had been estranged. So should it always be between all who come together to their Master's Table. So let it here be, to-day. So it is, I trust. When you come here then, to-day, to your Master's Table, stand close together, my brethren. Let heart beat warm to heart. Let hand clasp hand in love. Forget not that ye are all children in the same blessed household of faith, heirs of the same God and joint-heirs with the same Lord Jesus

Christ, to the same inheritance, even that which is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."

But this Holy Sacrament is more yet in blessing even than all this, to those who come to it in true faith.

It not only thus, in its subjective influences, brings us spiritually to Christ, and to each other, but better than all these it also brings Christ to us, gives to us our personal Lord Himself. This is, indeed, in the deepest, truest sense of the word, a Sacrament, "commanded of God and having the promise of grace." In the words of our Catechism, "It is the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the external signs of bread and wine, given unto Christians, to eat and drink, as it was instituted by Christ Himself."

This Holy Sacrament has in itself objective reality, inherent sacramental character and blessing. It is, by virtue of its divine institution, a channel or "Means of Grace." We do not make it such means of grace: Christ has made it all this. We put nothing into it; we only receive from it the divine contents

which Christ has placed in it, namely, the grace, the heavenly blessing, Christ Himself, Who, through it, communicates Himself to all who eat and drink of it.

It is not a mere remembrance, a mere confession, a mere witnessing: it is really a "communion," an actual feeding of the soul upon the glorified Christ. It is the Lord's Supper. Jesus Himself is in this sacrament, and through it, He is offered to, and received by, all who partake of it. As our Confession declares: "Of the Supper of the Lord they teach that the Body and Blood of Christ are truly present, and truly communicated to those that eat in the Lord's Supper." Or, as even Dr. Watts has sung:

"Here, at Thy table, Lord, we meet
To feed on food divine;
Thy body is the Bread we eat,
Thy precious Blood the wine."

To this Holy Sacrament we are now, as Brethren in the Gospel Ministry, and as fellow members of the Church of Christ, about to come. "All things are now ready." The Feast is prepared. The Master Himself has

set for us the Table. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies, Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over." And now he invites us to it, and waits to welcome us as His guests.

Come, then. Come, hungering after Christ as the divine food for your soul. Come, thirsting for Christ, as the divine water of life, "of which if a man drink he shall never thirst." Come in humility, in penitence, in faith, in love, in renewed consecration of yourself, and your all, for time and eternity, to Him. And, thus coming, we, as the disciples on the way to Emmaus, holding blessed converse and companionship here to-day with our Risen Lord, shall feel the warm glow of His love, and shall say to each other: "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way?"

Brethren of the Gospel Ministry. You especially will, to-day, rejoice to stand here together at the Table of your Divine Lord. Toiling, as we are, in widely separated Fields; often burdened with duties and cares and sorrows beyond our strength; isolated, lonely, and often cast down; how we long for each other.

How our hearts ache, at times, for each other's presence, and sympathy, and words of cheer. To-day that longed-for joy is realized. We are to-day together. And together we are now to stand here, side by side, at this Table of our Master. It is a blessed privilege. I rejoice in it. My heart quickens at the thought. I grow impatient in my love for you, as brother ministers, and as brethren in Christ, to come with you here. May He, whose servants we are, whom we preach, and to whom we have given up our lives, as His ambassadors; He, who is the Chief Shepherd of us all; may He, I say, to-day, gloriously and abundantly impart Himself in all the fulness of His Divine-Human Person, to each one of us. May He fill us with the comfort and strength of the Holy Ghost. May we here, by this food from heaven, be girded anew for our work. And having all stood faithfully at our various posts of duty, and done for Him here on earth our work, when at last one by one we fall in death, as soon we will, may it only be to arise and awake in that other and heavenly life, where forever we shall be with each other and with the Lord.

DR. MARTIN LUTHER AS A CHRISTIAN.

TEXT.

"He being dead yet speaketh."—Hebrews xi. 4.

To a consideration of this purely Christian side of Dr. Luther's character, or to the contemplation of Luther simply as a disciple of Christ, I wish, to-day, to invite your attention. It is both an interesting and profitable subject, and its study will do us good. Martin Luther, as an example of piety, commends himself to the imitation of us all, and, in this respect especially, he, being dead, yet speaketh.

Considering him in this respect, let us look at Luther's piety.

I. IN ITS EXPERIMENTAL AND DEEPLY SPIRITUAL BEGINNING; AND

II. IN ITS LOFTY SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENT AND MATURITY.

Luther's Christian life began where a genuine Christian life always begins, and where

alone it can begin; viz., in his personal spiritual quickening by the Holy Ghost. It began in his coming by faith, as a lost sinner, to Christ, and in his acceptance of Him as his own personal Saviour. From his childhood he had not only been strictly moral but had also been in external devotion exceedingly religious. Never had a day of his life passed without Prayer. Always he had faithfully observed every requirement of the Church, and no known religious duty did he ever omit. Like Paul, he was, "in the law blameless." But yet, with all this fidelity to the external duties of a religious life, he had no true peace; no real rest of conscience. He still felt burdened with a sense of guilt and of unreconciliation to God. "How shall man be just with God?" "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?" These were questions which often, he tells us, pressed heavily upon him and often filled him with inexpressible wretchedness. No one, perhaps, ever had a deeper sense of sin or came under a deeper sense of his lost and ruined state because of sin, than he did. When

Alexis, one of his intimate college friends, was assassinated he was most deeply affected, and cried out: "What would have become of me had I thus suddenly been called away?" Soon afterward, in the same year, 1505, when on a visit to his parents, a short distance from Erfurt, he was overtaken by a terrific thunderstorm, and was filled with terror at the thought that his hour had come, and that he might now be summoned to meet God. Falling upon his knees he prayed earnestly for mercy. And thus, for several years, he felt his guilt; saw the pollution of his soul; realized himself a lost, undone sinner, seeking peace meanwhile in the prescribed works and ceremonies of the Church and in efforts at self-salvation, with none to show him to Christ and to the Cross. So great was his conviction that, at length, when he was a student in the University of Erfurt, his distress of soul, under this burden of his sinfulness and lost condition became so great, so utterly intolerable, that, relinquishing all the fine prospects before him, he fled into the neighboring Augustinian Monastery, hoping there, by pen-

ances and vigils and fasts and bodily mortifications, to work out a righteousness which should be well-pleasing to God and bring him the peace of soul for which he longed. But the more he thus sought, the deeper he sank in spiritual wretchedness; the denser became the gloom of his soul; the heavier pressed upon him his burden of bitter anguish.

One day, when sitting at the table in the Monastery silent and dejected, the Vicar-General said to him: "Why are you so sad, Brother Martin?" "Ah," he replied, "my sins, my sins. Alas, I do not know what will become of me." "It is vain," he cried, "that I make promises. Sin is ever the strongest." Then the Vicar-General, Staupitz by name, who was himself a true believer in Christ, said to him: "Why do you thus torment yourself? Look at the wounds of Jesus Christ. Look to the blood which He shed for you. Instead of torturing yourself thus about your sins, and trying yourself to atone for them, throw yourself, by faith, with them, into the Redeemer's arms. Trust in Him; in the righteousness of His life, in the atonement of His death. Do not

shrink back. God is not angry with you. It is you who are angry with God."

Like a direct voice from heaven came these gospel-words to Luther's wounded spirit. In a moment he now saw it all; saw God's whole plan of salvation. Man is justified before God, not by works but only through faith in the blood of Christ. "God forgives man," he exclaims, "freely, fully, immediately, alone for the sake of Christ. By believing in Christ, by trusting my soul to Christ, God promises to forgive me. I do believe. I believe in the forgiveness of sins. I believe in the forgiveness, for Christ's sake, of my sins. I now believe."

Thus believing, at once the burden fell from his soul, and the peace of mind which he had so long sought was, at last, his. As D'Aubigne writes: "From this moment light sprung up in the heart of that young monk of Erfurt. The word of divine pardoning grace had been spoken to him; he believed it; and now, disclaiming all self-merit of salvation, he resigns himself confidingly to the favor of God through Jesus Christ."

Yet other experiences, however, were necessary to bring Luther out into the full assurance of this new life in Christ into which he had thus been brought. And these, also, God gave him.

Several years after this date, while Luther was engaged in his duties as a professor in the University of Wittenberg (in 1509), and whilst preparing lectures on the Epistle to the Romans, he came to the passage: "The just shall live by faith." His meditations on this Epistle had brought much of the light of truth into his soul; but now, this passage impresses him with more than ordinary emphasis. He receives it into his heart as a special message from God. It gives strength henceforth to the life of God in his soul. It brings him victory in every hour of doubt and conflict. On a journey to Rome (in 1510 or possibly later), and being stricken down with sickness at Bologna, his former distress of mind again weighed heavily upon him, especially his sense of sin, in view of the nearness of the judgment. But just when his anguish was at its height this same word—"The

just shall live by faith"—again beamed in upon his soul as a special ray from heaven. It dispelled his fears and again brought him peace and joy.

But Luther was not yet in the full and abiding possession of gospel freedom. He was still somewhat under the influence of a lingering delusion. He could not yet fully rid himself of the almost universal belief in the efficiency of indulgences, and of masses, prayers, and other good works, to deliver the soul from the fires of purgatory. Having arrived at Rome, he was one day, under the power of this delusion, ascending upon his knees "Pilate's Staircase." Whilst thus engaged, he seemed to hear a voice speaking to him in thundertones from the very depths of his soul: "The just shall live by faith." It was enough. Horrified, and ashamed of his superstition and degradation, he sprung from his knees, a free man forever—free in the fulness of the gospel of Christ, and free from the delusions and superstitions of Rome, forever. He now speaks of himself as being

born again a new man, and as entering by an opened door into Paradise itself.

God had now given His own work His own finishing touch. He had taught Luther fully the doctrine of "Justification by Faith alone;" and it, through Luther, went out henceforth as the Church's hope, to fall no more forever. Luther and the Church could henceforth sing: "Ich habe nun den grund gefunden:

I now have found the sure foundation,
That holds my anchor evermore;
'Tis found alone in Christ's redemption,
And naught was in God's plan, before;
This anchor-ground shall ever stay,
When earth and heaven have passed away.

Thus did Luther, as a Christian, begin at the real and true beginning of a Christian life. He came, as a convicted, sin-burdened soul, to Christ. He cast himself, as such, by faith on Christ, and on Him alone, for the salvation he needed. He saw, in all its evangelical fulness and clearness, God's method of saving sinners. He heartily accepted it. He, at once, also felt and knew its blessed saving power in

his own soul. At once, also, he was assured that he was in Christ; that he was reconciled to God; and that he had the testimony of the Holy Ghost within his own heart through faith in God's word, that his sins, for Christ's sake, were pardoned, and that he now was indeed an heir of heaven.

And that also, I may add, was the birth-hour of the Reformation. Then, already, when Luther thus was once brought to see that God's plan of saving sinners is, not by works of man's righteousness, but only and fully through simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then, I say, was the great Protestant Reformation, also, born; a Reformation whose essential and cardinal doctrine is the great gospel doctrine of "Justification alone by Faith."

The true anniversary therefore of the Reformation is not the anniversary of Luther's natural birth, November 10th, 1483, nor of the nailing up of the ninety-five theses, but the anniversary of his new, spiritual quickening. The day when he thus first experienced, through faith in Christ, that his sins were for-

given, that he was a redeemed and reconciled child of God; that was the day on which the Reformation was really born, the day when the Gospel was again restored to man.

In view of this conversion, and real heart-consciousness of his salvation, which Luther thus experienced, let no one ever regard Luther as some wrongly do, as a mere formalist or half Romanist in religion. No one ever had a deeper personal religious experience than he. No one knew better than he what "Experimental Piety" is.

Proceeding, let us now notice:

II.—The Christian character or piety of Luther in its splendid subsequent development or maturity.

Luther not only began well as a Christian, but he also continued well as such. He not only received the new life of Christ into his soul, but he also cultivated and carefully nourished what he had thus received.

There are two means which God has provided, by whose faithful use our spiritual or new life in Christ can and will be increased, and will be made to grow, and expand into

healthful and fruitful vigor. Those two means are God's Word and Prayer. The Word is the soul's true spiritual food, containing Christ, the Divine Manna from heaven, and he that eateth of that bread shall never hunger. Prayer, as the expression of desire and faith, is the spiritual hand by which man reaches out and takes hold of this food; or, in answer to which, God imparts the blessed contents of the Word to the soul, and feeds it richly upon that food. And thus by the Word of God, including, of course, always the Sacraments which are God's visible word to man, the Christian life is nourished and is made stronger day by day, down to the close of life.

Thus pre-eminently did Luther, as a Christian, nourish the new life of Christ which was begun in his baptism and quickened into conciousness in his conversion. No one, as a Christian, ever more loved, and studied, and fed upon, and built himself up in christian character, by the constant study of the Bible, or Word of God, than did Luther. His love for it was a very passion in his soul. What-

ever might be his other cares and duties, he would still find a few hours' time each day for the private reading and study of the Sacred Scriptures; and often he would snatch hours of needed rest at night, and devote them to meditation upon the precious truths which God here in His Word revealed to him. When he was a prisoner for nine months in the Castle Wartburg, all his time, day and night, save only what was absolutely needed for sleep, was given up to this one book: God's Book. During the five months, also that he was a prisoner in the Castle of Coburg, he again gave himself up to the study of it alone. And, to-day yet, in the room which he then occupied in the Castle of Coburg may be seen written, in his coarse, bold chirography, all over the walls and doors of the room, one precious passage of God's word after the other. In one place, e. g., are these words: "I shall not die but live and declare the works of the Lord." In another place, over the head of his bed, is this passage: "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." In the museum at Ber-

lin there is carefully preserved his hand Bible, the copy which he had constantly on his study-table, and which he daily used. The margin of almost every page is all written over with comments, suggestions, holy aspirations and prayers; and on the title-page he has written: "If this, Thy Word, O Lord, do not comfort me, I shall perish in misery."

Thus was the Bible ever a precious book to Luther; and thus did he daily and hourly feed his soul upon it, and build himself up in christian character and life by it.

Equally was Luther a man of prayer. His biographers tell us that two hours each day he gave up to private devotion; and, in order to have them, he would often rise long before day, or sit up late in the night, but, under no circumstances, would he suffer himself to be deprived of this daily private communion with God. He never felt himself prepared, is his testimony, for the many cares and duties and perplexities which each day brought to him, until he had first gone in prayer to God, and had received strength from Him for them.

the contrary it was, like all real works of God, brought into existence slowly. There was a long Dawn before Day; Twilight before the full-orbed Sunrising; Prophecy of better things before those better things themselves were given. As John the Baptist went before the Coming Christ, and prepared the way for Him, so there were Reformers before the Reformation; Lutherans before Luther; Protestants before Historic Protestantism; Providences before the final Providences which gave birth, at last, a second time, to Apostolic Christianity in the World.

The Hundred Years preceding the Birth of Luther were Years during which God was busy, getting the World and Church ready for Luther; and without which Divine Preparatory Work, Luther would have been an Historic Impossibility, and the Reformation unheard of in the past Annals of Time. But God, I repeat, was busy.

What true Gospel Preachers, for example, there were before Luther! John Wickliffe, the Morning Star of the Reformation, born in 1324—more than 150 years before Luther,—

preached mightily the pure truth, translated the Scriptures, lived and died for Christ, and left a deep religious impress upon his day and age. John Huss, born in 1369 in Bohemia, had, a century before Luther, bravely exposed the Corruption, and defied the Power, of the haughty Church of Rome; and when, July 6th, 1415, he was burned at the stake for the heroic Confession which he had thus made, there was "started a Fire the Red Glow of whose Flames flashed far out upon the dark night, and continued to shine until, at last, the new, longed-for Reformation Day arose." Savonarola, also, the noble Italian Reformer, Patriot, Martyr, right in the very Heart of Popedom, held faithfully aloft the pure Banner of the Cross, and bade men trust for salvation in Him who there died for them! And then what a long line of noble Martyrs, also, in lower Ranks, before Luther, there were! What witnesses for Christ there were, here and there, in many Lands, sealing their testimony with their blood: more than two hundred having been burned as heretics at the Stake in the very City of Augsburg, where afterward the

that the Holy Spirit had, indeed, renewed him in the image of Christ. His spirit and life both declare him to have been, indeed, a true child of God, a sincere, earnest, holy disciple of the Saviour.

I claim not, of course, perfection for Luther as a Christian, for no one is perfect. Faults and imperfections may easily be detected both in his spirit and life. He made no attempt to conceal them. They all lie on the outside of his great rugged nature, out in the full sunlight of broad and open day. But still study that character of his. Get yourself once right into the innermost soul of the man. Acquaint yourself thoroughly with him. Know his life. And where, I ask, in all the world's great galaxy of heroes, in all the Church's long calendar of saints, can you, in lofty christian character and sublime nobility of life, find anywhere his equal. Since the days when Paul so majestically trod the earth for Christ, who, in strength and perfection of holy spiritual being, in loftiness and singleness of aim, in high and mighty achievement for Christ, can rival this great and good and glorious Luther!

What joyfulness and cheerfulness of christian spirit. What submission and resignation to God's will under sore affliction. What deep consciousness of sin and what oft-repeated and humble confession of it before God. What simple and evangelical faith in Christ as his only ground of justification. What sublime christian courage. What brave confession of Christ and of His truth, even at the constant peril of his life. What unselfish and tireless labors for Christ and His Church. What holy, strong and unwavering confidence and trust, at all times, in God, even in darkest and gloomiest hours, cheering both his own soul and those of others, by singing, in inspired words: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble," or by chanting his own sublime "Battle Hymn," appropriately called the "Marseillaise of the Reformation:" "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott,"

> A mighty Stronghold is our God,
> A sure Defence and Weapon.

Thus, in all the graces which make up

christian character, how great was Luther! And how, when thus studied and contemplated simply as an humble and true disciple of Christ, he shows himself, measured by God's own word, one of the loftiest and purest, and best of all the sanctified host who have made up the long history of the Church, and one of the saintliest in all the long line of illustrious Christians who shine out in spiritual splendor, like stars in the hour of night, from the resplendent celestial glory.

Beloved, in this grandness of his christian character and christian life, are we followers of Luther? His early convictions of sin, his living, peace-speaking faith in Christ as his Saviour—have we these? His love and study of God's word—are we like him in that? His devotion to prayer—do we resemble him in that? His consecration of his whole self to the service and glory of God—in that are we like him? His diligence and tireless labor for the salvation of souls, his zeal for God's cause, his fidelity to conscience, his heroism for the truth, his brave courage in confessing Christ, his humility, his confidence in God, his simple

faith in Christ, his holy joy and hope of a better life when this life ends—in all these christian graces are we like him? Luther's grand piety, have we it? By such fellowship and by such holy similarity of christian character and life are we and he bound together? Ah, to be Christians as Luther was; let that be our ambition. In that let us all copy and follow him. Ever, more and more, in that let us covet resemblance to him.

May the mighty voice of this great man of God, this grand moral hero of the ages, this sublime champion of Christ and of the Gospel, this holy and heroic Luther, fall, to-day, with living power, like a voice from heaven, upon the conscience and heart of each one of us, upon the world dead in sin, and upon the Church so cold and formal and in such need of a new Reformation, and awake and quicken us all, bringing again a blessing both to Church and State; and thus, not only now, but on through the coming centuries, and down even to the end of time, in louder and yet louder tones, may "he being dead" continue to speak, speak for our pure Protestant

Bible-faith, for holy spiritual life and character in all who have named the name of Christ, for a Church separate from the world and full of the Holy Ghost, speak for the truth, for the right, for souls, for Christ, for God.

THE REFORMATION THE WORK OF GOD.

TEXT.

"And their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel."—Ezekiel i. 18.

It is not necessary to enter into critical explanation of these words of our text. To do so would consume more time than we now have at our command. They express, I believe, the great Truth that God is in all Human History; that in, and over, and above, all Human Activities there is ever an all-controlling Divine Providence, directing man's thoughts and plans and agencies so as to bring about, as the final result of all, His own great Moral Ends. It is the free agency of Man and the Infinite Sovereignty of God conjoined, co-operating, unconsciously often on man's part, to effect what God wills for man's good and for His own Divine Glory. The work which we call "History" is, as it were, as our Text declares: "A Wheel in the Middle of a Wheel:" the

one visible, the other invisible; the one human, the other Divine; the one grinding out, as it thinks, its own self-willed and self-accomplished results, and yet ever, in doing as it will, achieving the purposes of the Higher Will of Him Who sits supreme above and over all.

This great Truth of "God in History" stands out with marvellous clearness in connection with the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century. The whole history of that Wonderful Movement, from first to last, declares that God was in it, and that it was all His Work. No power less than His could possibly have achieved it. No other Philosophy or Solution of it than that which recognizes God as its Author can ever satisfactorily explain it. The Reformation is and can be only the Work of God. Whatever may have been the secondary aids and occasions of the Vast Movement; whatever may have been the mighty Human Instrumentalities employed by which to prosecute it, and by which it was led to a successful and glorious issue, still before all, back of all, above and over all, as the real Cause and Power and Author of all, producing,

controlling, and determining all, was God. "The world," said Luther, himself, one day, "is a vast and magnificent Game of Cards, made up of Emperors, Kings, and Princes. The Pope, for many Centuries, beat the Emperors, Kings, and Princes. They yielded and fell before him. Then came our Lord God. He dealt the Cards. He took the lowest, Luther, and with it He beat the Pope, that Vanquisher of the Kings of the Earth. As Mary sung: 'He hath put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree.'"

I wish to speak, to-day, upon

"THE REFORMATION AS THE WORK OF GOD."

I. THERE IS CLEAR PROOF OF DIVINE AGENCY ALREADY IN THE MULTIPLIED AND MARKED OCCURRENCES WHICH PRECEDED THE REFORMATION.

He entirely misconceives the real facts of history who supposes that the Reformation, like Minerva from the Brow of Jupiter, burst, at once, born in a day, upon the World. On

the contrary it was, like all real works of God, brought into existence slowly. There was a long Dawn before Day; Twilight before the full-orbed Sunrising; Prophecy of better things before those better things themselves were given. As John the Baptist went before the Coming Christ, and prepared the way for Him, so there were Reformers before the Reformation; Lutherans before Luther; Protestants before Historic Protestantism; Providences before the final Providences which gave birth, at last, a second time, to Apostolic Christianity in the World.

The Hundred Years preceding the Birth of Luther were Years during which God was busy, getting the World and Church ready for Luther; and without which Divine Preparatory Work, Luther would have been an Historic Impossibility, and the Reformation unheard of in the past Annals of Time. But God, I repeat, was busy.

What true Gospel Preachers, for example, there were before Luther! John Wickliffe, the Morning Star of the Reformation, born in 1324—more than 150 years before Luther,—

preached mightily the pure truth, translated the Scriptures, lived and died for Christ, and left a deep religious impress upon his day and age. John Huss, born in 1369 in Bohemia, had, a century before Luther, bravely exposed the Corruption, and defied the Power, of the haughty Church of Rome; and when, July 6th, 1415, he was burned at the stake for the heroic Confession which he had thus made, there was "started a Fire the Red Glow of whose Flames flashed far out upon the dark night, and continued to shine until, at last, the new, longed-for Reformation Day arose." Savonarola, also, the noble Italian Reformer, Patriot, Martyr, right in the very Heart of Popedom, held faithfully aloft the pure Banner of the Cross, and bade men trust for salvation in Him who there died for them! And then what a long line of noble Martyrs, also, in lower Ranks, before Luther, there were! What witnesses for Christ there were, here and there, in many Lands, sealing their testimony with their blood: more than two hundred having been burned as heretics at the Stake in the very City of Augsburg, where afterward the

Reformers made their brave Confession of our Holy Faith. And all these witnesses were kindling the Fire and preparing the Conditions of Success, for the great final Witnessing by Luther and his fellow Reformers.

But there were many other marked preparatory Providences. The discovery of the Art of Printing in the year 1440, less than half a Century before Luther was born; the Discovery of America in 1492, only nine years after his Birth; the Overthrow, just at that time, of the Dominion of the Moors, who for the previous eight hundred years had ruled over Southern Spain and had menaced Europe; the Check which, at last, had just then been given and the Victories which had just then been secured over the invading Turks; the Printing, just then, of the Bible; the Founding of the University of Wittenberg, in 1502, by the Elector of Saxony, which afterward became the very Center of the work of the Reformation; the Conflicts of Rival Popes, and the Divisions by which the Church of Rome was then torn and shaken to her Center; the Jealousy and Contests for Supremacy between

the Papal and the Imperial Power; the Revival of Learning, and especially of the Study of the Classics, and of Biblical Hebrew and Greek, under Reuchlin and Erasmus and others; the Dethronement of Scholastic Philosophy, and the awakened Desire of the Literary World for a more solid Scholarship; and, above all, the deep-seated and inextinguishable Longing of Human Hearts, every where, for a clearer Knowledge of God, and for a more satisfying Way of Salvation: these all reveal the Presence and over-ruling Agency of God, working in anticipation of the Reformation, breaking up the fallow Ground, removing obstacles, overturning opposing forces, gathering the needed materials, kindling and fanning the increasing flame, and every where, by the awakened mental activities of the age, by social upheavals, by political complications and entanglements, by the growing corruptions and oppressions and wicked ambitions even of the Church, by the sudden birth and progress of Science, of Literature, of Art, of Discovery, of Invention: by all of these factors, God Himself, in that Century, trod with Divine Imperial

step out over the broad busy Theatre of the World's History, and, louder and mightier than all other Voices, His Voice commanded: "Prepare ye the Way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Let every Valley be exalted, and every Mountain and Hill be made low, and the crooked be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the Glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all Flesh shall see it together: for the Mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

But we have also:

II. Clear proof of God's agency in the Reformation period itself: in the instruments, influences, actors, and forces there employed.

These are all intensely at work, acting and counter-acting on each other, aiding or checkmating each other, each with its own special object or end in view, and yet each, as we can see now, whether Friend or Foe, whether desiring to do so or unwilling to do so, each, I say, helping on to Success the Great Reformation Work, and all together revealing God, presiding over all, and, by and through

all, working out His own great Purposes of Blessing to the World and to the Church.

Take Luther, for example, the chief Actor in the stirring Drama, the mighty Human Leader of the august Movement, the principal Instrument, under God, by which the sublime Work was achieved—what a child of Providence he was! How his history from Beginning to End, shows Divine Purpose, Guidance, Protection, Control! What successive Providential Links bind together and unify the whole Life of that Wonderful Man! Who can read his Marvellous Biography and not be compelled to say: "This Man is a very Prophet of the Almighty, divinely created for His Work, separated from his very Birth to it, directed at every step of his Being in it!" Read his Life! With what transcendent natural abilities for his Work did not God endow Him! Physically, mentally, socially; his will, his courage, what traits characterize him! And then what a Providential History he had! How clearly God's Hand was in it all! His birth, for example, of peasant, and not of noble, blood, so that the Glory of his

great Work could be attributed only to God and not to Man; the Piety of his Parents, and their earnest Religious Training of him; his Father's Efforts, poor as he was, to give the promising boy an Education; the boy's own insatiable Thirst for Learning; his painful Experiences as a Charity Student at Mansfeld, at Magdeburg, at Eisenach, at Erfurt; his Poverty, compelling him to sing before the doors of the citizens of Magdeburg, crying, "Panem propter Deum," "Bread for God's sake"; his Adoption into her home by the compassionate Madam Ursala Cotta, where he remained three years; his astonishing Success as a Student in the University of Erfurt, where his genius arrested the attention of all, and gave promise of a most brilliant Future; his Providential Discovery while there of a Copy of the Bible; its Effect upon Him, in revealing to him the Errors and Corruptions of the Church, and, above all, revealing the Sins of his own heart, and of his Need of a Saviour; the Incident of the Thunder-Storm, and the sudden Death, right by his Side, of his young Friend; his own nearness to Death by a

Wound which he accidentally received; his deepening Sense of Sin; his Flight for Spiritual Relief into the Monastery; his Disappointment; his Direction, through the faithful Study of God's Word and the Evangelical Teachings of the Vicar-General, to Christ as the burdened Sinner's only Saviour; his Trust, his living Faith in Christ; his Joy, and Peace, in his newly-found Saviour; his grasping and clear Apprehension, from his own Experience, of the cardinal Doctrine of the Gospel, and of Protestantism, "Justification by Faith in Christ alone," thus fitting him spiritually, by the Holy Spirit's leading of him, to be the Leader of the Church, and of the World back again to a pure Apostolic Christianity; and then, after this, his ordination as Priest; his Visit to Rome, and the awful Revelations of the Corruptions of the Church, by which his honest German Soul, on that Visit, was made acquainted and shocked; his being made Doctor of Divinity, when he took a solemn Oath to be always true to the Teachings of God's Word, and to follow it, at any Sacrifice, wherever it may lead him; his Election as Professor

of Theology in the University of Wittenberg; his righteous Indignation over the Iniquitous Sale of Indulgences; his forced Conflict with the Pope; his compelled Antagonism, more and more, even contrary to his own Will, to the Church; his Burning of the Papal Bull, by which he destroyed the last Bridge to a Reconciliation with Rome; his Disputations with the Roman Doctors by which, more and more, his Eyes were opened, and he came to see the wide Difference between Romanism and a Pure Christianity; his final open and positive Rupture with the Church and bold and defiant Attitude against her; his Summons, by the Emperor, before the Diet of Worms, where, at the peril of his Life, he stood up grandly for Christ, and was true to his Conscience and to the Pure Word of God; his Imprisonment in the Wartburg, by which he was providentially led to translate the Holy Scriptures, the greatest Achievement, perhaps, of his whole Life, and itself sufficient, if he had done nothing else, to have immortalized him; and a thousand other Occurrences and Experiences in his History, stretching down over his whole

marvellous Biography: how they all reveal God's Hand at every Step, and all show that Luther, the mighty human Actor in the great Work of the Reformation, was divinely endowed, fitted for, and guided to and through the sublime Reformation which he thus accomplished.

He is, indeed, willfully blind, and worse than blind, who can rise from the Reading of this Life of Luther and not be compelled to acknowledge: "It was not Luther, but God, in and by and through Luther, who wrought the Reformation." As Luther himself in his grand Battle-Hymn sings:

"In our strength can naught be done—
Our loss were soon effected;
There fights for us the Mighty One,
By God Himself elected.
Ask you who frees us?
It is Christ Jesus—
The Lord Sabaoath,
There is no other God;
He'll hold the Field of Battle.

But the Hand of God, in the Reformation, is seen, also, in many other Aspects of it.

It is seen in the many Powerful Helpers in the Work, which, in various Relations, were raised up, on every Hand, to help it forward. How could the Reformation have ever, for example, humanly speaking, succeeded without the Friendship and Mighty Protection, especially in its early Stages, of the noble and God-fearing Elector of Saxony? How could Luther ever successfully have waged the Conflict he did, had not God raised up, to stand by his Side and help him, such grand Assistants as Melanchthon, Jonas, Bugenhagen, Brentius, and other illustrious Co-Workers, all over Germany; and such men, also, in course of time, in other Lands, as Calvin, and Cranmer, and Knox, who, lighting their Torch of Truth at the Altar of the German Reformation, bore abroad the blessed Fire of the Gospel into other lands, and soon made all Europe light with its divine Flame?

God's Hand is seen, however, also in the Checks and Restraints which He then so manifestly threw around the Enemies of the Reformation, and by which He kept them back from their purpose to utterly destroy. In

nothing is God's Agency in connection with the Reformation more clearly seen than just in this very respect of thwarting the plans of the Enemies of the Reformation. Its Preservation, under the Circumstances, was simply a Miracle. It lived only because God marvellously kept it, holding back, with the bit and bridle of His Providence, its infuriated Foes, saying to them: "Thus far, and no farther." Looking back now upon that Reformation Period what a Checkmating of Forces, by the Hand of God, cannot we everywhere see! Charles the V., had he been free, would, at once, have crushed Luther, and, by one stroke of his Imperial Sword, would have ended the Reformation. But he was held back by the Providential Disposing of things, from doing what he thus would have done. At war as he then was with the powerful King of France, and threatened, as he then was on every hand, by the Turks, and having troubles in the Netherlands, and embarrassments in Spain, and needing German Money and German Soldiers; anxious as he was to please the Pope by destroying Luther, he knew full well that he

could not afford to offend the Lutheran Princes of Germany, and especially the Elector of Saxony, to whom, indeed, he owed his Imperial Crown, but who was an ardent Friend of Luther and of the Reformation. And hence, thus held in check by these Providential Restraints, which God had thus cast, as bands of iron, around him, he was rendered harmless, and was compelled to pursue a mild and vacillating Course toward that which, in his Heart, he hated, and would gladly at one fell Stroke of his Imperial Power, have destroyed. So with regard to the Pope, also, and to the Church and the Kings and Princes, who were Enemies of the Reformation and hated it with an almost fiendish hate; who stood eager with all their Armies, and Wealth, and Influence, and Power, to ride it down under their Iron Heel into the dust; they were all, in some way, checked and held back from their purposes by the Invisible and yet Almighty Hand of God, and by His Irresistible Voice they were bidden: "Touch not Mine Anointed and do My Prophets no harm!"

And there is further Proof that the Reforma-

tion was God's Work in the fact that it was all accomplished by no other Weapon or Means than simply God's Word. The one great Means, above all others, by which the Reformation was effected was the Word of God. Moral weapons alone were used for a great Moral End. God, in the Reformation, employed and honored, as an Instrument of mighty Spiritual Power, only His own Inspired Truth; that Sacred Volume of which Rome had long cruelly robbed the World, but which it was the glorious Mission of the Reformation again to unloose, and, in all its unchained and open Freeness, again to give back to Earth's spiritually famished Millions. The Bible, God's Word, first made Luther free and led him into the Light and Liberty of Christ; and then, by that one single Instrumentality, "the Sword of the Spirit," he went forth and cut off from Men the Cords of Ignorance and Spiritual Bondage by which every where they were bound, and gave to them also, the same Freedom which God's Word had given him. That Word he translated; that Word he preached with inspired Eloquence from the

pulpit; that Word he simplified in Catechisms for the Children; that Word he expounded and applied in countless printed Volumes, which were scattered every where and read by eager Millions; and that Word, during the Thirty-Nine Years of his Connection with the University of Wittenberg, he taught as Theological Professor to thousands on thousands of Students, who afterward became Ministers, and went every where preaching that Word which they had heard from his lips, and thus was God's Word the Means by which the Reformation was achieved. This was the Weapon by which the Battle was fought. Against Papal Anathema, against Imperial Ban, against Fires of Persecution, against Wealth, and Custom, and Superstition, and Prestige, and Power, against all these it won its way into Life and Victory, and planted itself immovably, as a mighty Moral and Religious Factor, in the very Life-Current of the World. Not by force of Arms, not by the Power chiefly of Learning and Scholarship, not by the Friendship of Kings and Great Ones of the Earth, but in spite of these, by this one

Mighty Agency of the Word of God; the Word of God preached, and taught, and lived, by men who themselves had experienced its Power; the Word of God vivified and driven home on men's Consciences and Souls by the Holy Ghost, its Divine Author, by this it was that the Reformation was born, and was carried on, step by step, to glorious Victory, and thus proved itself, by this very means of its achievement, to be, indeed, the Work of God. Mighty Power of the Word of God! Foe of Rome! Bulwark of Protestantism! Keystone of the Everlasting Arch of Christianity! Only Means needed by the Church, then or now, or any time, for Defence, for Conquest, for Victory! God's Word! Sole Rule of Faith and Life to the Reformers, sole Weapon of their Defence, sole Ground of their Comfort, Hope and Joy, sole Instrumentality by which they wrought their grand work for God and for the World! May that simple Word of God ever thus, also, be our Trust! And, with Luther, clasping the Bible to our Hearts, using it as our Tower of Defence, let us bid defiance to World and Devil, singing:

"And were the World with Devils filled,
All waiting to devour us,
We'll still succeed, so God hath willed—
They cannot overpower us;
The Prince of this World
To hell shall be hurled;
He seeks to alarm,
But can do us no harm;
God's smallest Word can fell him."

Passing now to a final thought, I yet remark,

III. That in the perpetuity and growth of Protestantism, since the Reformation, we have a still further proof that the Reformation which gave birth to Protestantism was indeed the work of God.

After four Centuries Protestantism still lives. Through all the mighty opposition which has, from time to time, been arrayed against her, she has successfully fought her way. Through the Thirty Years' War, through the unceasing Hostility of the Church of Rome, through the Tortures of the Inquisition, through all the Wiles and Ceaseless Activities of Jesuitism, through the Enmity of

powerful kings and nations, through the Early Strife of its Leaders and its oft-repeated own internal Dissensions and Schisms, through the Reactionary Age of its own Lifeless Orthodoxy, through the long, dark night, in its very Birthplace, of heartless Rationalism, through all the fierce and persistent Assaults upon it of Religious Indifferentism, of False Protestantism, of Romanizing Ritualism, through all these this Work of the Reformation has battled its Course, and still lives, a "Burning Bush," burning yet never consumed, because God, its Divine Author, is in it, and keeps it, and by its very Preservation amid all these mighty Forces which have thus been marshalled for its Destruction says to all: "This Work of the Reformation is My Work. Protestantism is My child. And because I am its Preserver it lives and will live."

And see, also, as another proof that it is, indeed, God's Work, to what marvellous Greatness, under God's Blessing, it has, in these Four Centuries, attained. "Protestantism" is to-day the Religion of the Civilized world! Over one hundred millions of souls are enrolled

under its Banners and hold and confess its precious Faith, and over four hundred millions are under its sway and influence. In Numbers, in Intelligence, in Influence, in Moulding Power over the Governments, Laws, Institutions, Literature, Commerce, of the World it has risen into Queenly Supremacy; and, to-day, sways its controlling Sceptre over all the Earth. God has thus made her great. He only could thus have made her great. And thus, also, He has acknowledged her as His, and has placed upon her the Stamp of His divine Approbation, declaring her thus to be a Tree of His own Planting, a Fountain of Living Water of His own Opening, whose Healing Waters have flowed and shall flow on for the assuaging of the World's Thirst down to the End of Time.

And, further: in the very Character of the Blessings which Protestantism has conferred upon the World, we have additional Proof of its Divine Origin and have still other Evidence that God only can be its Author. How numerous, how invaluable, how elevating, how ennobling its blessings! Universal Emancipa-

tion of Thought, Freedom of Conscience, Liberty of Speech, of Press, of Education, of Government, of Worship, of Science, and Art, Progress in and along all the lines of Civil, Political, Social, Moral, and Religious Elevation throughout all the World. Taught by God's Spirit and Word that God alone is Supreme, and that He alone is Lord of the Human Conscience, Luther held in his Hand the Key to the Lost Paradise, and with it reopened again to man its long-closed Gates, and bade him enter in and again be heir of all. And now by these Divine Fruits of the Reformation men can know it. These blessed Results of Protestantism attest its Divine Origin and declare God and God only to be its Author.

As God's Work then, and not as Man's let all Protestant Christians of every name, to-day, upon this Anniversary of the Reformation, recognize and hail the Great Event. It was all pre-eminently God's Achievement, and to Him therefore belongs the Glory. Luther was His creation: His Gift to the whole world. The Reformation was His Blessing bestowed

upon enslaved Humanity. Protestantism is the Rich Heritage of the Race.

Let the whole Protestant World, the Entire Protestant Church, unite in praising God for the Reformation, for Luther, for the Unspeakable Blessings both of Civil and Religious Freedom which have come down to us all from Luther and the Reformation. And let all who bear the Protestant name be true also to their Protestant Christianity: true to the Great Doctrines and Principles for which Luther and the Reformers contended so bravely. In all the Protestant world let Luther's Name be forever held in highest honor, and by every Protestant let God forever be thanked for having raised him up and enabled him to accomplish the Mighty Work which he did.

THE END.

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